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...en Women and War

Will Irwin

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MEN WOMEN AND WAR

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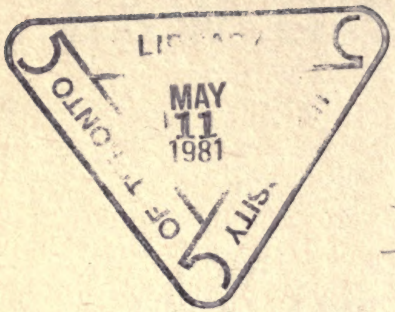
MEN WOMEN AND WAR

G.B.

BY

WILL IRWIN

LONDON
CONSTABLE AND COMPANY LIMITED
1915



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PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
RICHARD CLAY AND SONS, LIMITED,
BRUNSWICK STREET, STAMFORD STREET, S.E.,
AND BUNGAY, SUFFOLK.

PREFACE

THIS is a fabric of stitched things. But I suspect that all of us who have been trying, by the poor mosaic of human words, to convey Armageddon, have shown the same fault, scattering imperfect treatment. The thing is vast beyond all human conception; and it is covered by mists of secrecy. We see merely a glimpse here and there, and with each glimpse comes such a rush of emotions and impressions that we fail through sheer despair of recording them all.

I have recorded myself in these scattering essays as an adversary of war; but I beg the reader to let nothing which I have said carry the implication that I would turn the hands of the more civilised European nations back from their task. Democracy, attacked without and within,

is on test. If the more civilised European nations fail, the end will be a worse thing than war. Those same civilised European nations, together with a submerged and silenced party in the less civilised nations, hope that this will be the end of warfare. Democracy is on test; so, I feel, is real Christianity. In the teachings of Christ lie the seeds of Democracy. "Men are not equal; some are strong and some are weak; some are good and some are wicked; but let us act on the theory that they are equal. Because I am strong, I will not oppress my brother who is weak, and because I am good I will not despise my brother who is evil." That canon of the new law became, in time, Democracy. The more civilised nations of Europe, joined with that nation which has such splendid possibilities of civilisation, are fighting this war against old, barbaric and Pagan conceptions of kingship. It is not political warfare; it is a Holy War.

London: March, 1915.

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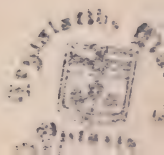


MEN, WOMEN AND WAR

I

DETAINED BY THE GERMANS

September, 1914

On the nineteenth of that swiftly moving August of this terrible year, Brussels awaited with tempered apprehension the appearance of her conquerors. I am here obliged to recapitulate a history grown already stale when these lines go to press. Belgium had held back at Liège the German advance; but the heavy German siege guns had already come into position, and one read between the lines of the carefully censored reports that the resistance at Liège was over. There had been outpost fighting at Tirlemont, only an hour or two by motor car from Brussels. The populace of the Flemish metropolis lived in a mood of mingled grief, triumph, and

fear. New mourning was everywhere; in that heroic defence of Liège the flower of Brussels had fallen. Two troops of cavalry recruited from the noble or aristocratic families of the capital had charged a German masked battery in the first brush; only eighty came back. One countess of the realm had lost two sons and the third lay wounded in the Royal ballroom, now become a hospital.

Such of the populace as had no private cause for mourning were in the mood, I think, of a small boy who has blacked the eye of the village champion and awaits, triumphant but apprehensive, his second rush. The wiser heads of Brussels knew that their city now lay at the mercy of the Germans. They did not expect, however, a general advance through the city, much less a permanent military occupation; the worst they feared was a cavalry raid "for moral effect." But that advance, be it raid or occupation, was upon them; they knew that. The Government, the Queen, and most of the foreign ministers, had moved to the fortified city of Antwerp; almost alone among the Diplomatic Corps

the American minister, Brand Whitlock, stood his ground, hoping, since he represented the strongest neutral Power, to do something for the people of Belgium as he had already done much for the Germans stranded in the land of their enemies.

Externally, that once-gay city—so lacy in its architecture, so green and bright in its parkways—moved about sober and muted. From its public buildings fluttered the Red Cross flag; through its wide-sweeping avenues passed and repassed the *Garde Civique*—futile little citizen soldiers, armed mostly with old-fashioned single-shot muskets, crowned with bizarre felt hats which looked like old-fashioned bowlers furnished forth with red braid and red cockades. They were on their way to positions in the outposts of the city. Though the out-of-doors cafés were still running, most of the tables were empty; the few sippers of hock and liqueurs spoke almost in whispers. And everywhere you looked, you saw how the clock had stopped on August 2—the day when Belgium began her heroic fight. The theatrical and

cinema posters, falling ragged and shabby from the boards, proclaimed the bill for "week of August 2"—and stopped. By the elevator of our hotel hung a framed "carte de jour" giving the table d'hôte menu and music programme for the day.

No one had thought to take it down; and it also bore the date "August 2"—the day, perhaps, when Belgium ceased to exist as a nation.

Into this situation came four American correspondents, all save one novices at war. For the two weeks during which Belgium held the frontier the English correspondents, furnished with passes from a complaisant Belgian Government, had been dodging back and forth in automobiles behind the firing line, getting glimpses here and there of the fighting. They wired back full accounts and let their home editors take chances with the strict English censorship. And they overdid the process, "I notice," said a great American editor, "that if it gets written often enough, it gets printed." An indiscreet British reporter sent to London the exact location of the Belgian General

Staff, heart of the army. A careless censor let it through to publication. The English Government recalled all its correspondents, the Belgian Government all its passes.

There we were without passes or standing of any kind; we had merely our passports, our credentials, and letters from the American consul certifying that we were personally known to him as what we represented ourselves to be. And we had come too late for any action! We started for Belgian military headquarters, to see what could be done, in a state of determined hopelessness. We found the Department of Passports sitting about a table in an antique courtyard, like a picture of the French Revolution. We were surprised at their cordiality. Yes, it was true that there were no more newspaper passes. But our consular papers were sufficient. With them one could go anywhere. They wished the American gentlemen well. In the light of later events, I can see the deep Flemish sarcasm in the remarks of those little military men. If four mad Americans wished to put their heads into the Prussian noose,

let them! At the time, however, we failed to perceive that. Our sole emotion was joy. We were going to see something!

So we started—Cobb, Dosch, McCutcheon, and I—in a Brussels city taxicab whose driver was willing to take a chance for an extra tip. We had just arrived; we knew nothing of Belgian geography; only one of us had any knowledge whatever of French. We did not even know where we were going. On the way out, however, we stopped at the house of a well-informed American, who gave our chauffeur a kind of itinerary. "Let him follow that!" said he, "and keep on until he's stopped!" I remember now that I caught the word "Louvain." Louvain, the name that is written on the heart of the world, meant nothing to us then.

At the entrance of the parkway which leads from Brussels to the Bois, we caught our first glimpse of war. A barricade of street cars blocked the way, before it lay a new trench, the turf carefully cut away in blocks and stacked for future use. Two little cannon poked their stupid noses from an embrasure beyond. Still

further along lay a block of barbed-wire entanglements, strung on newly planted posts. A sentry stopped us, nodded his head, let us go on. As he gave the word, he cast upon us one curious look, then he fell back and leaned against a tree. All the lines of his face drooped; and the other units of the *Garde Civique*, resting by the roadside, had that same expression of overburdening anxiety. Their ill-fitting little red-and-blue uniforms, topped with those beautified bowler hats, their old-fashioned muskets, and that expression, marked them for what they were—citizen soldiers, half-trained, waiting to fight a hopeless battle of honour. Now we were in the great, broad parkway which leads to the Bois. That superb bit of landscape-gardening stretched away deserted; there was neither pedestrian nor vehicle in sight. On all sides advertising devices, trolley tracks, entrances to golf links, dancing pavilions with refreshment booths, proved how freely the people used this park in a normal August. This vacancy, this silence among all the familiar signs of human habitation, resembled a scene from one

of those horrible nightmare stories wherein some noxious vapour of a comet strikes our world and leaves no man, but only the works of man. Tervueren lies a few miles out from Brussels. It is a fashionable suburb with deep woods, pretty villas and elaborate summer palaces. Here was a little life; a few bare-kneed, well-behaved Belgian children played about the sidewalks—the last playing children we were to see for many a day. There were more details of the *Garde Civique*, more street-car barricades, trenches, and entanglements. Again a dispirited sentry stopped us and gave us a glance of curiosity as we went on. Again we marked the listless attitude, the drawn, anxious faces of these little citizen soldiers.

We were in the open country now; though, indeed, the perfectly crowned European road ran between unpaved footpaths, as in a city park. Suddenly the roads had become inhabited; and all the pedestrians were walking in our direction—a steady flow toward Brussels. Everyone carried something—a suit case, an old-fashioned country bag, a round bundle tied

up in bedding. This advance guard was mainly men or young women, and they walked briskly; some of them were even talking or laughing. The line came on and on, and presently we were in the zone of old women, of children, of whole families, of the more heavily burdened. Two old ladies tottered weakly along, carrying bundles across their backs. They wore those ridiculous little purple-flowered bonnets of the 1880 period which the Belgian countrywoman keeps for her best; beside them a young boy struggled with a child's wagon, full to overflowing. A whole family passed. The children, grouped round an overburdened mother, each carrying a bundle. The father trundled a wheelbarrow, shaded by an umbrella, and containing, among much bedding, a pair of baby twins, sound asleep. A fringe of rolled umbrellas surrounded the edges of the load. Everyone, in fact, carried at least one umbrella—provision against sleeping in the fields during one of the summer rains of Brabant.

No one spoke, but no one wept either. The world was struck silent, dumb. The

only sound was the shuffling of their feet along the dry pathway. Dosch, who had seen the San Francisco disaster, remarked on that: "It was just that way in San Francisco," he said.

Here and there a family, more opulent or more lucky than the rest, had horse transport. Mainly the vehicles were farm wagons, drawn by a single, great-necked Flemish horse which plodded sullenly with its overload of household treasures, of bedding, of cooking utensils, and of people. An aristocratic landau trotted more briskly through the crowd. A peasant girl drove it; in its double seats were three women in fashionable clothes and two priests. The women, looking ever and again back on the road, were crying softly into their handkerchiefs—the only tears I saw. And once again there was a fashionable English tan-coloured trap, commandeered from I know not where—for a farm horse drew it. Among these larger vehicles threaded the dogcarts of Flanders, the owner pushing from behind, the dog-auxiliary plodding soberly between the front wheels. And among these people, as among the increas-

ing crowd of pedestrians on the footpath, silence.

There were guards at every crossroads; either men of the *Garde Civique* or citizen soldiers arrayed in those blue tunics and round caps which the Red Cross women of Brussels had been stitching night and day. Sometimes they stopped us; always they let us go on after one curious, searching glance. A soldier coming up on a bicycle —he wore the uniform of the regulars— hailed us from behind. He merely wanted a lift, for he was carrying half a dozen bottles of beer. We took him aboard with his wheel and his load. He was a tired little man, very drawn of face and sober of mien, though he tried to be gay. As for the Germans—he knew nothing, except that they were coming.

We topped a rise—and there lay the Belgian army. It filled the slope before us and the hollow beneath. In the foreground a group of cavalrymen stood about their picketed horses while a cook in his undershirt dealt out coffee from a milk can. Further along, an infantry regiment lay stretched out, resting, in a field of

lucerne. Still further along were more regiments; in the background, in the hollow of the hills, battery after battery of artillery threaded through the roads, taking position.

Never have I seen men so dirty, so utterly bedraggled and weary, as these who gathered for that pitiful little Appomattox of Brussels. The last ounce of strength seemed to be gone from them. The sentry who stopped us and inspected our pass drooped on his gun. His coat was matted with grease and dirt; transversely, just above the knee of his baggy trousers, was the unmistakable double rent of a bullet. Many had been slightly wounded; one wore a bandage like a football head harness; one had a splash of absorbent cotton and a strip of adhesive plaster across the place where the bridge of his nose had been. In groups by the roadside the lately and slightly wounded in the last engagement awaited transportation to the rear. They were hugging bandaged arms and legs; their faces showed the torpor which is the second stage of violent suffering.

We were all a little *exalté* we four, by this first touch of war, even by the horror of it, else we should not have gone on, I suppose, past what proved afterward to be the main force set to hold Brussels against the invader. But go on we did, across another hill. There, in a hollow forward and to our right, lay what looked like another village. Behind it rose straight columns of smoke. I stopped a refugee and inquired what the town might be. "Louvain," he said. "Is it burning?" I asked in my novice French. "Oui!" he said. And then he asked that question which we were to hear again and again in the course of that day: "Where are the English and the French? Have they come?" "No!" I was forced to answer. He turned without visible emotion and went on.

Then, as we stood there by the road, some one said: "Listen—is that firing?" From the clear horizon came a noise like the distant thunder when a storm gathers. It stopped; it began again in sudden bursts; straining our ears, we caught an undercurrent—a steady, rattling buzz

which we knew for musketry. We had stood for some time listening before I perceived that the field of purple cabbages to our immediate right was not uninhabited. Here and there peeped out blue and red képis. It was a Belgian picket line, concealed in the cabbage rows or behind the neat little mushroom-shaped haystacks.

Here the chauffeur set his foot down. He would not go on. With my imperfect knowledge of French, I made out that he was afraid of having his cab appropriated. He put it on those grounds ; as I, agreeing with him, put it on the grounds that we should never see the grand entry to Brussels if we let ourselves be cut off. Both of us, I take it, had deeper and more emotional reasons, I know that I had.

Before us lay a rise in the road which seemed to command a better view of the little town. There were still a few refugees along the road—all, however, coming our way. If they could walk along that road, so could we, said the bolder spirits of the party. At this moment came frantic protests in Cockney English from an automobile which had drawn up beside ours.

It contained two British moving-picture men with their camera.

"Better keep out, gov'ner," said one of them. "We're getting ready to hurry back. There's fighting just beyond. We filmed a Belgian troop of cavalry going into action, an' filmed 'em twenty minutes later coming back with half the saddles empty."

Yet it drew us—that rise—with a kind of fascination. And at last we cut loose and started, telling the chauffeur to wait our return.

The refugees were still dragging on, but at a quickened pace. I stopped them now and then to ask for news. None could give any; but always was there the same pathetic question: "Are the French and English here?" And always, when I answered "No," the questioner settled into his expression of hopeless stolidity before he plodded on. The firing had stopped now; the unnatural silence settled again over earth and air and people. Still rose the column of smoke beyond. We thought then that it was a village of Louvain burning—forecast of its fate a week later. I know better now;

it was only some dry brush behind the town, set on fire by the late skirmish.

We topped the rise and saw nothing but more refugees; and still we kept on. Indeed, the refugees came even more thickly, plodded even more silently. A tall, dirty, weary Belgian soldier walked in the middle of one group. Tired as he was, he was carrying a bundle for a woman. He stopped me. "Don't go on, gentlemen," he said. "It is very dangerous." As the conservative of the party, I wanted to take his advice. "Aw, he's some deserter," said the rest. A few steps further on a Belgian soldier on a bicycle rested his foot on the ground while he talked with a choked, excited voice and a drawn expression to a group of women. He was the only person whom I had seen show any animation for an hour.

"Where is the fighting?" I asked.

"Toward Tirlemont," he replied, "eight or ten kilometres."

"You see—that other fellow *was* a deserter," said the rest. So we pressed on.

Now suddenly, round a bend of the road, appeared a tavern—"Le Lion Rouge

de Belgique "—terminating a long village street which curved out of sight. That was Louvain, said a passer-by; and he repeated that pathetic question about the French and the English.

It became plain that my French—the only French we had between the four of us—wouldn't do for complex inquiries about the position of the Belgian lines. Just then a priest came down the street, walking calm-faced and easily amid that silent, moveless crowd. I ventured to ask him if he spoke English.

"No, monsieur," he replied, "but in my establishment are certain brothers who do." We walked with him half a block. He opened a great, arched wooden door, and lo! we were in a quiet monastery garden—an old set of arched cloisters surrounding a little area of old-fashioned flowers and bearing pear trees. He smiled and pointed as we entered.

"Voilà—le tennis Anglais!" he said. There, in one corner, lay an unkempt tennis court; from an ash can protruded some badly battered old tennis rackets, much patched with cords and ropes.

"Some of our students are English," he said in explanation. "But it is vacation now." He rang a bell. From a far corner rose a group of black-costumed brothers and advanced towards us—serene, kindly faces all. But their English, it turned out, was even worse than my French. They could give us no explanations. Most of them, I take it, were Spanish. With all the grave courtesy of his race, the one who spoke the best English asked us if we would have some wine. Even in such times, one could not refuse an invitation like that. In a little room, furnished with a billiard table, which opened off the refectory, an old, bearded brother in a leather apron brought us some excellent old Burgundy.

Now we were out on the street again. There was no firing; and we had space to remember that we were very hungry. Across the square stood a little inn; on the square itself was stacked the transport of a village circus. The innkeeper could give us no information about Germans; but he did give us some bread and cheese and coffee. As we ate and

drank, we congratulated ourselves, I remember, on being there in spite of Anglo-Belgian conservatism concerning passes.

We had finished, we had taken out our money to pay, when the innkeeper burst into the room pouring out a flood of excited French, out of which I could at first make nothing. I calmed him down —and then I got it.

"Messieurs—eight German soldiers have been seen over there!" he cried, waving his hand across the square.

"Let's find the centre of this town," suggested some one—McCutcheon, I think. "Perhaps we can get the real information there!" I inquired for the Hôtel de Ville of the place, not knowing that I was naming one of the great architectural treasures of Brabant. "Par là," said the inhabitants, pointing along that little street by which we had first entered the town. There were scarcely any more refugees, only the silent groups—men, women, and children—in the streets. They did not even glance at us, though our Anglo-Saxon appearance must have been strange enough

to them. A limousine automobile came in sight, driving madly back towards Brussels. It bore a Belgian flag. An arm bound with the brassard of the Red Cross emerged from the door, waving us back. The chauffeur checked his speed as he passed; I fancy that he had some idea of taking us aboard. If so, he thought better of it, because he got up speed and went on. And we walked away, looking for the centre of the town and information.

Our street curved sharply. We were in a narrow thoroughfare, bordered by the overhanging second stories of the Middle Ages.

Suddenly uniforms flashed into sight, crossing the street. They were eight worn, hatless Belgian soldiers on a dodging run—their shoulders hunched, their guns dragging behind them. They disappeared into a doorway. "Looks like street fighting!" we said. "Let's hurry on." The silent populace, I noticed, were all looking up the street.

And then—twenty yards before us—a man on a bicycle shot out of an alley, stopped and turned. Behind him came a

man on horseback, a rifle slung over his shoulder. He, too, pulled up. They wore grey uniforms. They wore spiked helmets —they were Germans!

The man on the horse was tall, lithe, tanned to a brick-red. He stood, looking over the populace with a kind of sarcastic smile. And suddenly both men unslung their rifles.

We all had, I think, the same thought. Belgians behind—Germans before—street firing about to begin. I ran for a doorway, and found it amply occupied by one of our party. Losing no time, I got up an alley which the members of our expedition called afterwards by my name. Dosch followed. Alone, McCutcheon stood his ground, posting himself at the entrance of the alley ready to go when the firing really did commence.

There was no firing; we began to perceive that the Belgians had been simply running away to hide. Now came other horsemen to join the first scout. The road was blocked in that direction. Aimlessly, we wandered back the way we had come. We neared Le Lion Rouge de

Belgique—and lo! we were beholding the passage of an army!

It was the head of the line. First came motor-cycles; then bicycles; then troop after troop of Uhlan lancers, dust-grey men on coal-black horses, riding as though on parade. The knots of people in the streets began to press forward, as though drawn by a fascination of curiosity stronger than their fears; and we pressed on with them. The cavalry was still going on—grey, grim, perfectly ordered. As we came near Le Lion Rouge, a new detachment was passing. At the head rode a scout; I saw him outlined against the sky, and he remains a photograph in my memory. He was a tall, lean man on a long, lean bay horse. He rode with the short English stirrup, his knees up toward the withers. He held his gun, unslung, by the grip and trigger, and he faced us as he rode. His whole attitude was that of tense alertness. No one in the crowd moved. That attitude meant business.

It must have been just afterward when, down the straggling village street which leads towards Brussels, came a heavy

shot, followed by the lighter "whip" of a service rifle and, after a moment, by a scattering volley. "Street firing has begun," we thought. It was not that, I know now; it was the thing which the world has already come to know by the polite word "reprisals."

A whirring, very irritating in that stretched silence which followed, sounded from above. We looked up. A heavy grey biplane, flying very low, was running overhead—the eye of the column.

There was a short space between each detachment. And in the interval the silent crowd—not even a child cried—would come out of the doorways and creep cautiously toward the corner.

Then, as each new detachment appeared, you could hear the shuffle of their wooden shoes as they ran to hide in doorways, from which a fascination stronger than the sense of safety ever drew them out again.

Until now we had held to the theory that this was only a cavalry dash on Brussels—for we had seen only cavalry so far. But as we listened there came a

sound heavier than the ring of hoofs on the macadam roads; and then—singing. Round the corner swung the head of an infantry brigade giving full voice to "Die Wacht am Rhein." They were singing in absolute time; they were singing in parts, like a trained chorus! Never have I heard anything quite like the beat and ring of their marching. They wore heavy, knee-high cowhide boots; and those boots, propelled by heavy, stalwart German bodies, struck the roads with a concerted shuffling thump which shook the earth. Singing sounded behind us—"Hail to the War Lord." Along that street by which we had entered Louvain came another column of infantry, timed perfectly to fit into the plan of march. This regiment, I take it, must have been recruited in some intellectual centre. Half the men wore spectacles; they had the sharp faces characteristic of the German scholar. Intent on their singing and their marching, looking neither to right nor left, they shuffled and stamped on to conquest and death. It had become a horde by now—cavalry, infantry, artillery, cavalry, infan-

try, artillery, rolling, pouring toward Brussels and toward France.

Firing broke out at the front—the crackle and rattle of small arms. The Germans had struck that skirmish line. Here was something to see. On a hill toward our right stood an old convent. We started for that eminence to get a view. And as we started, an excited Belgian ran across our path shouting: "Regardez, messieurs!" Into the convent gate were pouring men in blue-and-red uniforms—the Belgian colours. At that point came the second panic of our crowded day. Again we stood in the line of fire, if firing there was to be. Myself, I damaged a hedge.

Here, by the way, came a miracle. I began to speak French. Years ago I took one college course in French; and since then I have acquired, for my own pleasure, a good reading knowledge. I had never tried to speak it, except to order a meal. I had believed that it was too late in life for me to begin. Now it became necessary for me to speak, and, like the puppy thrown into the water, I

swam. I came back from Louvain a French conversationalist.

Before Le Lion Rouge stood a group of townspeople, a little recovered from their first panic; they dared crowd up close to the line of marching Germans and to talk in low voices. I singled out an intelligent-looking man, explained our predicament, and asked for the town authorities. He waved his hand toward the Hôtel de Ville; and as he did so, a sarcastic gleam lit his grey, Flemish eye. "A *grand* chance you have to live," he said—or its French equivalent. For by now, though some held out for keeping close and waiting our chance to get out privately, most of our party favoured giving ourselves up as soon as possible. We had heard that the German army carries along no war correspondents, and that for hostile correspondents caught within their lines there was a short shrift. What our status was we did not know.

I had at first the dim, ridiculous idea of making ourselves known to the burgomaster, and asking his advice. We did not know, of course, that he, poor man,

was already a hostage—and that he was to pay the debt with his life!

We started for the Hôtel de Ville. Still the Germans streamed and streamed through byways and alleys and thoroughfares—a resistless flood, a horde, a grey avalanche. Under perfect discipline, they looked neither to right nor left. Here and there a group of inhabitants, noting our strange, foreign clothes and speech, gave us one glance of the eye. A town policeman in blue came down the street, escorted by a man ringing a bell. He stopped and made an announcement to the crowd. They were to return to their homes and "rest tranquil," he said. From whom, I asked him, came those orders. "From the Germans, of course," he said, with a kind of contempt for my stupidity.

Still we pressed on, because there was nothing else to do. By now we saw that this was not a village, but a city. And suddenly, on a turn of the crooked, mediæval street, we came out on a square bordered with tall, dark buildings. Even at that moment I noted the massive, Gothic church to the left, and the tall

structure, looking as though made of old black lace, to the right. This was the Hôtel de Ville. And under it lay—a police station. The square was filled with an orderly confusion of great, high-powered automobiles. German officers, immaculate in spite of their hard advance, stiff-shouldered, many of them wearing monocles, were descending and mounting ; before the fashionable club of the city, orderlies were unloading kits.

The police, in a condition of nervous, strained anxiety, had no time for us. Seeing the burgomaster ? They laughed. Were there any Americans in town ? They did not know. Had we an American consul ? They threw out a list on the table. Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, France—but no United States. To what German authority should we report ourselves ? They did not know. We stumbled out again. A boy whom we had picked up as guide told me that M. Saabe of the Berlitz school spoke English. We tried the office and residence of M. Saabe. He was not at home. A passer-by informed us that in the Spanish college—we knew

by now that Louvain was a seat of learning —lived a man who took charge of American affairs. We found him. He did—of South American affairs. He spoke no English, but he took us for Englishmen. When I explained that we were Americans, I caught a shade on his countenance. No, he was sorry to say there were no Americans in Louvain. He could offer no suggestions. And all that time, I pause to say, there stood half a mile away an American college, flying the Stars and Stripes, inhabited by American priests, hungry for companionship of their own. We never knew that either until just before we marched out of Louvain!

All this time the horde rolled on and on. Night was falling; it was necessary to find quarters. We wandered back toward the plaza over which frowned the Hôtel de Ville. The officers had distributed themselves by now, and from three quarters German columns of infantry were surging into the square, singing as they went—a grey flood that poured and poured, at once an avalanche and a machine. Here, I remember, McCutcheon, who had hitherto

maintained stoutly that we might find a way back to Brussels that night, turned to me and said simply and solemnly : " Will, we'll never get back to Brussels."

Here, too, we saw a more sinister sign of German occupation. Down the street came four Belgian youths with Red Cross brassards on their arms. They were carrying a litter which bore a covered dead body. Two priests, their heads bowed, walked behind. Reprisals again, of course —the finished product of a firing squad.

Just then a voice spoke at my shoulder in English. Were we the American gentlemen ? It was M. Saabe, who had got news of us and had picked us by our appearance. He spoke both English and German. We engaged him at once. He guided us from hotel to hotel. The Suisse and Metropole were full of German officers ; the sentries did not allow us within a block of them. On the square before the station stood a line of humble railroad hotels. All of these were full save the little Hôtel des Mille Colonnes, which had four beds to spare, though no food. We established ourselves and sat

in the open-air café before the door, wondering what to do. It seemed best to give ourselves up that night. But to whom ?

As we sat arguing the question I saw three officers descend from one of those eternal grey automobiles shooting round every corner in defiance of all speed laws. They looked to me like extremely agreeable human beings, especially one tall fellow, who laughed as he dismounted. I pointed them out. The rest agreed with me. And on the impulse of men who want to get a disagreeable operation over, we rose and followed them into the café. I approached the tall fellow and began to explain in French.

" This gentleman speaks English," he said, pointing to a little captain. I explained again in the mother tongue. He looked at me severely.

" How did you get here ? " he asked.

" In a taxicab," I replied.

" In a taxicab ! " he repeated, and burst into roars of Germanic laughter. Through his gasps he translated to the others. Their laughter rattled the windows.

"You came right through a battle in a taxicab!" repeated the Herr officer who spoke English, and went off again into roars of laughter.

Into the group stepped a young captain whom I shall remember all my life as one of the bonniest, blithest, most attractive men I ever saw.

"Americans!" he said in almost perfect English. "I've been to New York. Do you know—" and he rattled off a string of names, among which we recognised those of Herman Metz and John Fox. He insisted on buying beer. He exploded over Cobb's account of our adventures.

"But you must come with me to the Adjutant," he said.

So, under his escort, and chatting sociably all the way of New York and the war, we marched to the ancient Palais de Justice, already headquarters of the General Staff. In the courtyard without stood, parked, their automobiles and the heavy trucks which carried their luggage. Two companies of infantry, weary but still erect, stood guard. The Captain left

us outside. After a few minutes he returned.

"The Adjutant cannot see you until morning," he said. "But you must stay in Louvain for the present. I will give you a letter to him!" He opened a kind of flat leather haversack which he wore slung under his left arm. There was within a perfect writing desk. From one compartment he took a writing pad, from another a pencil, from another an envelope, from another an official stamp. His note finished, he replaced his stationery in the proper compartments and closed the writing kit with a snap which expressed all the methodical efficiency of the German army.

We dined that night on "delicatessen," which we found at a store not yet bought out, for the Germans were buying, not looting. As we sat eating at the beer tables of our little hotel, detachment after detachment of German privates, released from the ranks by some special permission, came in for beer. They were terribly hungry; they glanced eagerly at our food, but made no move to seize it. This was

a forced march: the authorities, I take it, intended to feed the army from the confiscated food supply of Brussels. We gave them the remnants of our meal, and they ate it all, even to the cheese rinds. Some spoke a little French and English. From them we got tales of town wrecking further back on the line—of inhabitants who had fired upon them or killed them while they slept, and of the terrible German vengeance. They made no bones of this fact. But they told it soberly, prosaically—not with the devil light of the eye which illuminated certain German accounts of atrocities which I heard later, when the campaign grew hot.

A stalwart, intelligent-looking soldier came over to our table. He spoke a few words of French, McCutcheon a few words of German. When he learned that we were Americans, he managed to inquire if we were football players. Dosch and I acknowledged that we had been. He shook hands. He was a forward on the German International Soccer Team. I had seen him play at the last Olympic games in that remote age when the

world was trying to replace war by sport!

All that night we woke at intervals to hear the rumble, rumble, rumble of great steel machines, the shuffling tramp of great human machines, the pop-pop of automobiles and motor-cycles running at top speed, the buzzing as of giant bees from the aeroplanes overhead. All that night we rose at intervals to see the square before the station piling up with the rear-guard tunnage of an army. The horde was still pouring through when we awoke. It was to pour through without intermission for three days, until earth and air and sky became all one great grey machine to manufacture death, until even the eternal singing became not a cheering sound, but only the buzzing of the wheels.

That morning — it was Thursday — Cobb, elected spokesman because of his cordial ways and his wit, had two interviews with the Adjutant. He came back from the first one grinning broadly.

"Well, boys," he said, "we're still the joke of the German army!" The Adjutant,

too, had roared when he heard of the taxicab. He, too, had translated, and the Palais de Justice had rung with Germanic laughter.

"I should say, gentlemen," Cobb quoted the Adjutant, "that you owe your present delicate situation to an inordinate desire for travel or to an excessive appetite. You know we have no correspondents with the German army."

"Well, you've got four now!" said Cobb.

"I know—and it's not your fault, since we came to you, not you to us," said the Adjutant. "At the same time it would be dangerous for you, and certainly indiscreet for us, to send you through our lines to Brussels now. There have been reprisals along the road. Some of our men become brutes when their comrades are attacked, and some fool lieutenant might exceed his authority." The Adjutant spoke perfect English—even a little American slang. His sister-in-law came from Dayton, Ohio, and he had visited that city.

In a second interview the Adjutant

gave some orders disguised as polite advice. "The Secret Service has already reported your presence and movements," he said. "In giving yourselves up at once you acted discreetly. I have sent word forward to your Minister, and I should not be surprised to hear from him to-night. Remain quietly in your hotel. Go out to meals if you wish, go out for a drink if you wish, but show no curiosity about our movements, and talk as little as possible with our officers and men. Take no notes. Avoid out-of-the-way quarters of the town. You are our guests, but we are very busy. I shall send for you when it is time to go."

All day Thursday we waited while the horde rolled on, and all day Friday. M. Saabe found us a heavenly Flemish cook, a little woman with a Rembrandt Madonna face and a motherly care for the stranger. She could have made a pasteboard box into a salad. Of meat there was supposed to be none in Louvain; but every day she found somehow a piece of fresh veal or of ham. Poor soul, she was approaching the time for her child,

and it was near her house that the destruction of Louvain began. We walked down to her house for meals; once we made an expedition to get a bath; otherwise we read, played cards, talked—and waited. Every time an automobile coursed round the corner we rose, taking it for the messenger from the embassy. And all the while that grey flood which seemed to be engulfing the world rolled forever on, as certain and regular as time, as endless as eternity.

It was Friday night, and only wagon transport seemed to be coming through. There was cannonading that day in the direction of Malines and Antwerp. We did not know what it meant; none in the world was more ignorant of the world's news than we. Proclamation after proclamation had gone forth concerning the behaviour of the inhabitants—an indication that the situation was growing ticklish. The latest ordered everyone to bed at eight, ordered all windows closed and all doors unlocked, ordered a light in every window all night. Taking no chances on firing from our hotel, we made the pro-

prietor, regardless of expense, give us all the front rooms. It was approaching eight, and the last civilians had deserted the streets, when an automobile coursed up to our door and a soldier sprang out. Relief at last—we jumped to our feet.

But it was only our old friend, the international football player, very hungry —as he showed by pointing to his stomach and his mouth—eager to find something to "essen." He talked fast in German, and I got the word "Waterloo." Something had been happening at Waterloo.

"Krieg? Bataille? Battle?" I asked.

"Yah!" he said, and turned away.

Depressing news! Waterloo is just beyond Brussels. If the Germans had struck there the main force of the Allies, the battle might last a week. During that week none would pass us through the defences. And if the Allies won—we were in the back track of a beaten army, retreating, through massacres and reprisals, in a hostile country. We had learned only half an hour before that there really was an American college in Louvain. The Belgian tobacconist who

dropped this information in his offhand way assured us that he meant " l'Amérique du Nord," not " du Sud." They had a flag with many stripes. They had a statue of an " Indien sauvage "—Sitting Bull. We made up our minds that in the morning we would report ourselves at the American college. We started a game of cards, and lost interest after the first hand. One by one we crawled to bed. And we slept heavily, miserably, in air-tight rooms, the oxygen burned out by the lamps.

Next morning I realised that the rumble had stopped. I looked toward the station ; the grey line no longer rounded the corner into the town. A few German soldiers were stringing telegraph wires, a few sentries paced up and down at the corners ; otherwise there was only the litter and reek that an army leaves behind. The inhabitants walked about their customary business, as people a little relieved from the strain. And while we looked, McCutcheon said : " A Brussels taxicab ! "

There it was with its meter and its capped chauffeur and two woman passengers ! The road must be free. We waited

no longer, but went straight to the Adjutant. The transport of the General Staff was moving from the square—half the automobiles were gone already and the rest were packing. The guard had dwindled to a squad, which lay resting in the straw, droning "Die Wacht am Rhein."

"Gentlemen, you are free to go," said the Adjutant. "The road is clear. I should recommend the road by Tervueren. I sent a message to your Minister yesterday."

That message, by the way, was never delivered. When we tumbled our unkempt persons into the embassy that afternoon, Brand Whitlock welcomed us as from the dead. We had been reported missing for four days.

It was the last we were ever to see of the Louvain that we knew. A week or so later, it was blotted from the face of the earth. We had made an engagement with madame, with the courteous M. Saabe, to come back when the war was done. I think now that under their Flemish courtesy lay a sense of the truth

—a perception of the powder mine upon which they were sitting; for I remember that they were very grave when we suggested this return. They were of God's good people, who served the stranger for God's love; and about them centres my anxiety for the city whose name is written on the world's heart—Louvain.

II

THE WRECKAGE OF WAR

September, 1914

My memories of Belgium, in the stricken time, centre about this city of Louvain. She, with her tragic death as a city, sums up for me the rear of war, the train of blighted lives, of suffering, of fear, of hopeless, utter misery which it leaves behind.

Louvain, as we found it, was a pretty and quiet University town—our own Ithaca, or Cambridge, or Oxford, with a Belgian and churchly twist. The Roman Catholic Church of the world maintained it; this university was the finishing school for the priesthood; even in America it is a boast of a Roman Catholic priest that he studied at Louvain.

Besides the university, the town included a brewery, famous for its sour

beer, and a few glass works. The people, like all the Belgians, were a merry and peaceable lot. And suddenly—in the space of three weeks—Louvain was in the midst of an unjustified, an uncalled for war. Suddenly her best and most vigorous sons found themselves " called to the colours." Gradually the wounded crept back, to fill the nunneries and monasteries. There came a day when the guns thundered and the rifles rattled at their very city gates. Another day, and a bedraggled, wounded, sullen Belgian army poured through the town in retreat. All that day, refugees came into Louvain, carrying their poor little necessities in bundles ; before noon, this horde of misery was pouring on, stupid with grief and fear, toward Brussels.

By then, it was all over. The burgomaster, an old, sick man, soon to pay for the conduct of his city with his liberty, had met the invader at the Malines gate, had been seized as a hostage, had delivered over the keys, the government, the whole conduct of his city, to the invaders.

Our party arrived from one direction just as the great, grey hordes of Germans

came from the other. In glimpses here and there, we witnessed the thorough manner in which the German army takes possession of a conquered town. Plainly, they knew every alley, every seat of municipal activity, in this city which they had come to conquer. Within an hour the generals, the princeling who accompanied this army, and the higher staff officers, had been assigned to quarters at the *Table Ronde*, the fashionable club of Louvain. Their eternal, grey automobiles had unloaded their kit, the servants of the club were at work getting dinner.

The staff officers quartered themselves at the best hotels in the city; one could not get within a block of the entrance.

That night, one of us saw the headquarters of the General Staff. They had gone straight to the Palais de Justice, the court house of Louvain, and taken immediate and familiar possession. A battery of typewriters, manned by soldier and civilian clerks, was hard at work. Long before that, the windows and walls bore a proclamation in French and Flemish, announcing the names of three hostages

who had been seized for the good behaviour of the town, and commanding the citizens to " rest tranquil " in their homes. The Germans had brought along the printing-press which turned out this notice, and the linguists who put it into French and Flemish.

Wherever we turned, we saw that same methodical, cold-blooded efficiency, that provision for everything.

The very automobiles, shooting round every corner at reckless speed, carried musical horns, whose notes indicated the rank and command of their occupants. A two-toned bugle, very soft and musical, proclaimed the coming of the generals and the high staff officers, for whom everyone must make way.

More marvellous than anything else, however, was the absolute system with which they carried through Louvain, almost without halt or stop, what must have been two whole German armies. Through the Grande Place, toward which three lines moved, from which three lines converged, the flow was, for three whole days, continuous.

A great grey machine—the word which has been spoken so often of the German army, and which must be repeated, because there is no other. And mostly it was literally a machine. To an extent which no one foresaw this has been a war of automobiles. Many of these had been hastily armoured against barbed-wire entanglements. In front would be a double scythe, sharp and strong, overhead would run a steel framework, to hoist the cut and tangled wires out of the way of the occupants.

The human machines who sat on these inhuman machines all belonged to the same blond, stolid silent type of North German. The infantry regiments, and sometimes the solid ranks of Uhlan cavalry, marched through the town, singing; and that was the only human sign they gave. The army, as yet out of contact with the enemy—for these troops had not fought at Liège—was working perfectly, all its units still under absolute control.

The time came when this or that detachment, sent abroad for some military purpose, dropped out of line for a glass

of beer, or for some food; for they were all ravenously hungry on this forced march to take Brussels. And the human side, a rather kindly and cordial side, began to show. Louvain being a brewing centre, there was plenty of beer. The lucky detachments hurried to the cafés and bars. Some of them invaded our hotel. Here and there was a scholar who spoke English. We bought them beer; we chummed with them. A little soldier boy, to whom we gave a cheese sandwich from our own "delicatessen" supper, told us that he was from Hamburg; he had sailed to America; there it was where he learned his English. They had come a long way that day; he had seen no fighting but he had helped destroy a town. "They shot at us," he said, "and we killed them." All this in the most matter of fact way.

The officers we met fall into two classes: there is the traditional Prussian martinet, who shoves civilians off the sidewalk; he keeps his manners in war. There is also a class of cordial university-trained human beings, who are pleasant to

all men save their enemies. Such of these as spoke French or English joked with us over our presence in Louvain, traded reminiscences of America and England, bought us beer. They also spoke in the same strain as the men concerning reprisals; on these they had a perfectly Germanic point of view. Inhabitants had fired on them; an infantry colonel had been killed as he slept; when these things happened, they followed their own inexorable rule: "Kill everyone, man or woman, in a house which has fired; kill everyone found with arms; if there is general firing, destroy the town."

It was another day, during which we kept to quarters in our little hotel by the railroad station, before we began to perceive that we might be living over dynamite. The sullen quiet of the citizens, creeping about such occupations as the Germans left them, we interpreted for absolute terror. We might have taken a hint, indeed, from the remarks dropped by Madame, at our hotel. A detail of soldiers came in to search our rooms for arms. Madame walking nervously behind,

protesting that hers was a peaceable house.

More and more proclamations poured from that efficient German printing-press, each stricter in its tone. First came one from the burgomaster and his two fellow hostages, assuring Louvain that their lives were in the hands of its people, and begging for order. Then one from the Germans, commandeering all gasoline ; then another ordering the people to cease circulating in certain streets, and to keep indoors after nine o'clock. It was Wednesday when the Germans took Louvain. By Friday night, when the rearguard came through, they issued an imperative order concerning the conduct of the Rue de la Station, and the other principal streets. All ground-floor doors must be left unlocked. All windows must be closed all night, and the curtains drawn. There must be a light in every window.

By this time, I think even we had begun to perceive the spluttering of the fuse. Our hotel faced the station and the rail-road yards. Here worked the postal and telegraph corps—on the first day the

Germans had established a military post-office, for soldiers' letters home. Here, also, were the quarters of the farriers, and from the area beyond rose and descended the great military aeroplanes.

In all this orderly confusion, we observed a grey prison van drawn up to a group of officers who stood near the freight house entrance. The door of the van opened; soldiers and two young men in their shirts descended. There was a brief conference; we saw someone reading a paper. The soldiers and prisoners remounted the van, and drove off into the railroad yards. We strained our ears for firing, but the cars rumbled too heavily. Presently, however, round the corner came four Belgian youths, wearing the insignia of the Red Cross; and they carried a covered litter. That happened twice more when we watched; once, just before the van drove away, the Belgian Red Cross came to our hotel for a litter which they had stored there; and once I heard the scream of a woman, as though in the final agony of parting. And that same morning we heard a shot round the corner. A few German soldiers ran;

then came silence. Presently, a prisoner went over to the railroad yards; then a litter passed, the occupant moving his head to show that he was alive. One Belgian in the crowd had tongue to speak. "It is a German officer," he said, "he is wounded in the knee."

"How?" we asked. "By accident," he said; but he blinked as he said it. And presently a corpse came back from the railroad yards.

We had seen three days of the German army by now; and it seemed to me, as I watched after this last tragedy, that the whole world had turned into a grey machine of death—earth and air and sky. The grey transport wagons rattled past, carrying grey machines of men. The grey motor cycles and automobiles streaked past, their mufflers cut out, chugging the message of death.

Overhead, the grey biplanes buzzed with a kind of supernatural power. The very singing of the regiments, as they swung in between the baggage wagons, seemed no more a human touch. It was mechanical, like the faces of the men who

sang—it was the music of a music-box. And over it all lay a smell of which I have never heard mention in any book on war—the smell of a half-million unbathed men, the stench of a menagerie raised to the *n*th power of stench. That smell lay for days over every town through which the Germans passed.

And as I sat in the very depths of intellectual despair, I saw a group of German officers looking toward the sky—saw an unnatural light over everything. I craned my neck, expecting to see a monoplane. It was the eclipse. Never have I known so dramatic a setting for a mood of the mind!

Next day the Germans, save for the garrison and a little wagon transport, commandeered hurriedly from the country round about, were gone. We were free to return to Brussels. As we swung along, in the joyful hurry of departure, we found the city rebounding. The people had seemed afraid to talk with us, as though distrusting our foreign manners and clothes in such times. Now they crowded round and chattered in French, or, occa-

sionally, in English. And they were pathetically hopeful. Without newspapers, without any authentic information, they were grasping, like all Europe, at rumours. And these rumours were all joyous. The French and English had sent money to repair the devastations of the Germans. The French had come; they were fighting the Germans below Brussels; the English had destroyed the German fleet.

On the streets was another, a sadder thing. Down highway and alley crept funeral processions, sometimes following coffins borne shoulder-high by youths, sometimes little, plain Belgian hearses with a gilded cross atop.

Yet, as we left, as we saw the last suburb of Louvain fade behind the hill, something of the joyous mood had infected me. Perhaps Louvain—barring that hard winter of starvation which all Belgium must endure—had seen the worst of this war. In happier times I would come back. I should find time then to see the interior of those great, vaulted churches, with their treasures of the Middle Ages,

which had stood locked during this curious visit. I should find time to laugh and to mourn with the good little Belgian people whom I had met over an old adventure and an old sorrow.

II

LET me leave Louvain for a time; I am writing, after all, not so much concerning that tragedy which all the world knows, as of war, and what it does to men and countries.

I was again to see the German army intimately, three days later. The machine had gone on, clear through Belgium, even to the borders of France. The English had made a stand at Mons, on the left of the Allied line. A German flanking movement, hurled unexpectedly by means of perfect transport at this point had thrown the English back toward Paris. A German adjutant, who handed out information and passes at headquarters, had said:

"You can probably go with these passes at least to the rear of the army. We have

some English prisoners on exhibition. Better go see them."

And so two of us rode in a Brussels cab to Braine-le-Comte, and then walked to Mons.

We had our passes ; and to guard against an over-nervous trigger we tied on our left arms white handkerchiefs, that looked at a distance like Red Cross insignia.

Not a village was left intact in the path of the German invasion. Everywhere there were proclamations. In each town and hamlet, it appeared, the Germans had seized their three hostages, to be shot if citizens broke the regulation against sniping. From walls and windows these men shrieked in black-letter type for their lives—begged the inhabitants not to molest the Germans.

Hal and Braine-le-Comte, second class cities like Louvain, stood unscathed ; but the villages were ruined along our way. Some hamlets were gone utterly, only the walls standing after the fires ; in one of these I found a group of inhabitants poking about in the hot ashes, trying to rescue what little they had. All wore

that same expression of unemotional stupidity which I found in Belgium to be the brand and mark of extreme suffering. It was a ruined country-side, too. There was neither cow nor horse in the fields. Germany, I understand, thriftily gathered in her crops before she went to war; Belgium had been caught napping. Such wheat as the peasants had cut, stook blackening in the shocks; the standing wheat drooped over-ripe, and it was dropping its seeds.

The eternal carrot and turnip and cabbage fields, which make Belgium the market garden of western Europe, were all untended. Across the fields coursed uncertainly, heedlessly, flocks of pigeons. I marked them narrowly, wondering at wild game birds in a country so settled; and then the truth flashed in upon me. These were domestic pigeons, whose home cotes were gone.

One perceives calamity like this only in little glimpses which typify the whole; and I think I caught it most typically in the state of the roads and streets. Anyone who has ever motored over French or

Belgian roads, in the far-gone period before this war, knows them for perfection. Anyone who knows the small French town, knows that you might take your dinner from its sidewalks. Now, the roadways were cut into furrows, the gutters stuffed with garbage and dirty straw, the tree-borders barked. The towns, so neat a week before, were dirty beyond belief; and over everything still hung that stench of an army.

We had left Braine-le-Comte, and were walking down the road, before we caught up with the transport of the German army. Amongst these men, as they sat stolidly bobbing up and down on the carts, or lolled at ease on their horses, shone out, now and then, a fine, powerful, intellectual face. And it always revived in me the chief intellectual horror of war. In these ranks, and equally in the French ranks, march incipient Pasteurs and Ehrlichs, born with the genius to save suffering in our world; incipient Faradays, born with the genius to interpret the forces of this world; incipient Rodins and Sudermanns, born with the genius to bring the beauty

out of the world. There they go, on to the chance of death before the guns.

This was the same army which had moved through Louvain, but a different army, too. All along the front there had been fighting; discipline had relaxed a little; now they noticed us, the strangers, but with a kind of sullen ill will. The first officer who stopped us to inspect our papers growled as he ordered us on. The second spoke some English.

"We have three thousand English prisoners," he said with a kind of dull triumph. And then in a querulous tone, "Tell me, you Americans, what are the English fighting us for? Why are they not with us?"

The road reached a great, gardened nunnery, shaded by tall trees. At the entrance stood a shrine of the Virgin, dressed out with flowers, now fading. There were no nuns in sight, but only Germans and the grey tunnage of a German hospital train. All along the roadside lay the slightly wounded, their arms in slings, their heads bound up, a dead look in their eyes. Each wore,

affixed to his coat, a numbered tag. From time to time, they passed a water-bottle down the line, drank, relapsed into silence.

We came, now, to a little village in which only one or two of the houses had been destroyed. A wayside bar was open; we stopped for a drink of mineral water, ordinary water being dangerous in these times. A little man, his face lined and seamed with anxiety, crawled up to us and addressed us in East-end cockney English. He explained, quickly, that he was a Belgian, but had lived a long time in London.

"It started 'ere, gov'ner," he said, "they shot off their first cannon over there. All night they 'ad me for guide. They tied me 'ands. They said they'd shoot me if I guided them wrong. They just let me go."

And there, across the road, lay the fresh signs of battle. A row of trees topped a rise; behind it, the fields had been torn and trampled until the earth showed brown instead of green. In the foreground lay what looked like a trench,

but it was a covered trench now—" the dead," the Belgian said.

And near this point, we came upon a farmhouse before which lounged a group of men in unfamiliar uniform. I had looked at them for thirty seconds before I realised that I was looking at the uniform of a Highland regiment in war-khaki. They sat resting on a kerb, their heads bowed ; they lay stretched out in the road in an abandon of weariness and discouragement. The insignia had been taken from their uniforms. A detail of German infantry with fixed bayonets watched them ; now and then a soldier growled a surly order.

" May we talk to them ? " I asked a sergeant who spoke French.

" Non—non," he growled. But as we passed on, a blue Scotch eye here and there glanced at us with a curious longing, as for news and conversation from one who spoke the mother tongue.

Around a bend appeared another line of prisoners, perhaps two or three hundred, this time mostly in the sober brown of the British line regiments. These marched wearily, in irregular ranks. Germans

guarded them on all sides; the captors were kicking them as they marched; the English were answering in low sullen oaths from the corners of their mouths.

They passed; and, as the wayside sign proved, we were in the village of Nimy, a suburb of Mons.

Or what had been Nimy. In three different places it had been set on fire. The doors had been battered in, the windows broken, everywhere on the bricks were the splashes of bullets, of whole volleys even. In the main street stood a little shoe store, its "best lines" displayed in a show window and dressed out with cards which read: "Cheap," "American fashion," and the like. The broken plate glass lay littered all over this little display. Further on was a hardware store; and this showed marks of a terrible struggle. Someone had built a barricade of stoves before the door; these stoves were all battered and broken; across them lay the wreckage of a door. Beside it a fire had started. The house was gutted—gone; but the pear garden stood untouched, the trees full of ripe fruit.

Here and there was a house unscathed amidst the ruin. Always it flew from a window the white flag of surrender; always on the door was chalked in German the legend—which we had been seeing all along the way—*gute Leute* (good people). A few women stood dumbly in the doorways of the unscathed houses.

We were in Mons, now—a "city of the second class," as we should say in America. The rear guard was quartered here; like Louvain the week before, it reeked with the army. Cavalry held the park; wagon trains occupied the whole great Grande Place. The walls were plastered with proclamations, announcing hostages, begging the citizens to be good, calling upon all who had brown leather, or men's shoes or socks, or grey cloth, to bring those commodities into headquarters. The cafés made a pretence of keeping open; a few silent guests even dined or drank at the tables.

There were no quarters anywhere for us, and as we, with our English appearance, threaded through the army, looking for rooms, the looks and gestures became even more hostile. We passed a battery

of artillery. They stopped us. In concert, they poured out a flood of German, accompanied by the waving of clubbed muskets, to show what they had done to the English. A packet of cigarettes appeased them.

It was getting on toward eight o'clock, and a proclamation from that eternal German printing-press informed us that all Mons must be indoors by eight. Down by the rusting, disused railway, we found at last a hostess with the courage to let us in. Two young German officers, she informed us, were quartered in her house. We saw them at dinner. As a wise precaution we showed them our papers and explained who we were. They looked over the papers, said a few formally polite words and fell to the business of getting out reports while they ate.

The German army had struck the enemy; it had seen its dead. Under a discipline no longer inhumanly machine-like, but dark and grim, it was rolling on toward Death, or Paris.

The time had come for four of us to leave Belgium; we were going back to

Aix-la-Chapelle in Germany by a returning troop train; thence into the neutral territory of Holland.

Brussels, when we left it, was intact but hopeless—a city running quarter-speed. All industry, except for a little retail buying, had stopped. There was no milk for your morning coffee, and eggs were growing scarce. Our hotel kept service running as usual, with two companies of German soldiers quartered in the lobby. In an anteroom off this lobby, once a kind of ladies' parlour, a detail of the Red Cross, whose business it was to care for the feet of the soldiers, bandaged and soaked and patched.

The inhabitants merely stayed indoors, watching behind closed shutters, or roamed the streets aimlessly. There were no newspapers; there was no news at all, except the announcement that Namur had fallen, posted by the Germans at all the crossways. Crowds would drift back and forth, following aimless impulses, like the flocks of newly-released pigeons which I had seen a few days before, over the barren fields by Mons.

The German garrison had settled down on the city temporarily; and having found place and quarters, they began to display a little of their human quality to such of the conquered as would have commerce with them. I saw a detail sitting on a bench before a bar trying to flirt, in heavy French, with three Belgian girls, whose lips laughed at the jokes, while their eyes looked defiance. I saw a soldier leading a stray baby home, and comforting him as he walked. Here and there, a soldier off duty would converse with a knot of people, giving them in French, or through an interpreter, such news as he had.

On the night before we left we visited at the house of an American who was standing his ground, when a Belgian entered.

"You knew Louvain, didn't you?" he said, in that even, dead tone with which people break bad news. "It's gone—destroyed, burned—*écrasé*,"—he burst out on that word. Then he told the story as he had heard it from the Germans. A son of one of the hostages had shot

the German commander. It had been a signal for firing from the roofs. And the rest had happened as a matter of course.

"La belle Louvain!" he finished. All the mourning of Belgium was in his voice.

"You'll see it to-morrow," he added.

At the Brussels station we waited from early morning until late afternoon. The Germans had restored traffic on this one line, to forward troops.

When I came into the Brussels station on the day before the Germans arrived in force, it was neat with perfect Belgian neatness, orderly, with a perfect Belgian order. Now infantry regiments rested in the straw along the platforms. A battery of artillery occupied the central platform. In one corner, a cook in his undershirt was dealing dinner into the mess cans.

Because we were going back to Germany, the troops were all smiles and cordiality; first toward their countrymen on the further platforms, and then toward us. Though we understood no German, and made it plain, they crowded round us, insisting on conversation.

Presently, we found the linguists among them. One had been a waiter in New York. He was going back after the war. Would we go to Hamburg? Because he had a mother in Hamburg.

There came then a straight, tall fellow, a corporal with a fine face. He had relatives in San Francisco, people of whom I know. Would I write when I went back, to say that I had seen him? He had intended to go to the Exposition.

There was still another, an officer, punctilious but very cordial. He had "finished" at Oxford, and got there his perfectly idiomatic English. His best English friend was a tutor at Oxford. Would we take the address? And when we got out, would we send him a note? "To say that I'm here and well," said the Herr Officer.

Yet, a moment later, when we asked him what Germany was going to do with Belgium, he said:

"Keep it, I suppose—then we'll be near England, and you'll see what we'll do to that horrible country!"

When the train started at last, fifty

soldiers scrambled for the honour of carrying our bags. They refused tips. An excited little private came along, waving a bottle of port. He threw it into the window of our compartment, and stood bowing with his hat off. When we finally gathered speed, the whole station rose up and cheered us madly.

It was sunset when we began to get the heavy odour of smoke; and now we had come over a hill—to a sight of Louvain.

They had told us the truth; it was a city of desolation.

That part of the town which lay nearest had been burned the day before; the smoke lingered, but the fires were down. In the foreground a glass factory still stood. Behind it were rows on rows of houses, so orderly, so well arranged that we did not realise we were seeing a dismantled city until we noticed that the windows gaped empty, and all the roofs were gone. We strained our eyes toward the great Hôtel de Ville, the pride of Louvain. It stood, rising stark and severely beautiful, in the desolation, all

its six steeples intact. Beside it rose majestically four ruined walls, all that was left of old St. Pierre's, that irregular, human Gothic church which had been gathering beauty for six centuries.

The Germans had spared the station, so necessary to their business. They had even managed, in the systematic destruction of a town, to save both electric plant and electric wires, for as we sat there the arc lights came on overhead.

A private thrust his head into our window; we talked no German, but he yelled and babbled on and on. From the distance came regular explosions. He waved his hand in the direction of the sound; he made pantomime of shooting, cutting, thrusting with a bayonet. There was no liquor on his breath; but he reeled and waved in all his movements. A detail strung along the station-railing took up the conversation. And all gave play to those same exaggerated gestures, as of drunken men.

Through the main archway of the station, as shadows in the half-light, we could see soldiers; we could see a troop

of men in white shirts, showing by their attitude that their arms were bound behind them. Three shadowy figures rose high above the rest on the pedestal of the statue of the " Liberator of Louvain " ; we heard, in intervals of the babble, a voice either reading or chanting. We got this scene in a half-light of whites and blacks and greys, like a Whistler etching. In its very dimness, its suggestion of mystery, lay half its horror.

A detail of cooks brought up a sleek Holstein heifer to the entrance of the arch. My mind on the greater event, I wondered dimly what they were doing, until a soldier, with one bayonet thrust, dropped her dead. They turned the carcass over ; they fell to skinning it, to cutting it up. All through the rest of that chanting, that babble of the soldiers, sounded the blows of the meat axe.

A Hollander, white about the lips, translated from the babbling of the soldiery.

" Those up there are men who are to die," he said, " the rest are the men who have been caught in the town. They are watching for an example."

We saw the three dark figures descend; we saw the white splashes, which were the captives, file away. We saw a dark line of soldiers follow. I cannot say for sure, because there were many sounds, but I believe that I heard, just afterward, the sound of volleys.

The engine came. And at last, we pulled out of Louvain.

The train shot into a cutting; and after that was no more of Louvain but smoke.

It was in Holland, two days later, that I saw the tiny, significant thing which was to bind up all my recollections of Belgium, of the German occupation of Louvain. I had stopped at a post-office to send a cablegram. On the wall hung a poster, done with the art which the European puts into his posters—a thin, anæmic child, an anxious mother, a kindly physician, and a lettered appeal for the International Society for the Prevention of Tuberculosis. I remember, then, that all through the half-ruined towns of Belgium I had been seeing this poster with eyes that saw not until now.

The world had been transformed in a

month; the currents were all running backward. In that incredibly remote period a month before, we had just bent all the fine strivings of humanity to the saving, the bettering, of life. For this purpose, the abler and finer spirits of the age had been peering through microscopes, combining and recombining the elements of nature—to make life, while it lasted, more endurable, to check human waste, to bring a new kingdom of the spirit to the earth. To that end had Faraday laboured, and Ehrlich and Metchnikoff, and those others more obscure, whose work flowered in the achievements of these giants. We were going further; we were beginning to see what we could do to co-ordinate all men's efforts for all men's good. We were trying to curb man's selfishness, that there might be in the world fewer hungry mouths, fewer lives blighted in the beginning. And now—an epidemic worse than tuberculosis had swept over the world.

And I thought that Odin sat enthroned in the seat of Christ.

III

THE RELIGION OF VALOUR

October, 1914

THE continental European peoples of this generation have been educated to the tradition of war, either as a virtue or a necessity. We Americans, reared in a generation of peace, a generation wherein we have found it unnecessary even to prepare for national defence, have observed with a kind of vague interest, even of amusement, that martial spirit of Europe. Through all the pretty, graceful life of France, of Germany, of Austria, even of England, it has run like a scarlet thread in the web. We, as pilgrims and tourists, have thrilled a little at the pomp and parade of it—the royal receptions on the Champs Elysées, with their line of ten thousand cuirassiers, the marching armies at German reviews, the Italian *bersaglieri*

hurrying in their route-step through the dust. We have refused in our souls to recognise the end and aim of all these burnished accoutrements and tossing plumes.

Occasionally, too, in our communications with our fellow men of Europe, or at least the able and enlightened among them, we have encountered that war spirit, that sense of the sanctity in slaughter, lying like a dangerous reef in the quiet current of their thoughts, and have been astonished to find in them a set of beliefs as foreign to our own as are the philosophical speculations of the Chinese. Pin them down to the basis of their opinions and you discovered, besides a few more or less vague national ambitions or national resentments, a philosophy which struck the American as harsh and curious. War, they said, was necessary and right because of its inherent nobility. It strengthened national character. It "purged nations." In peace men grew soft; in war, hard but pure. The Germans, as might be expected, were the chief exponents of this philosophy; I take it that the average Frenchman had

by now grown ready to forget Alsace-Lorraine, ready to accept the reign of peace if his neighbours would leave him alone. Yet I have heard it from Frenchmen and even from Englishmen: "The purging of nations; the glorious life!"—those were the catchwords.

It was perfectly undemocratic; that was the feature of this philosophy which struck the naked-eye American observer in that remote period of the world which ended in catastrophe in August, 1914. The strongest, the most hardened advocates of this philosophy admitted, when pinned down, that a *plébiscite* of the European peoples would always be against any aggressive war; that the common man, who has most to lose, would never sacrifice himself, his sons and his means of subsistence for anything short of desperate national defence. But these advocates of the "purging of blood" theory held somehow a vague belief that a nation is greater than its parts; that the welfare and glory of Germany or France or Russia or even of England was a nobler consideration than the welfare and happiness

of all the individual Germans or Frenchmen or Russians. To us, who had never spent two or three years of our lives under military discipline, with the mental training which military discipline implies, had never accustomed ourselves to a recognised caste system, these ideas seemed, somehow, like Hindu philosophy—a thing beyond our mental apparatus, a room to which we had no key.

Yes, the European blow-up would come some time, said a few of our travellers and observers. Most of us, however, simply refused to entertain the thought. That anything so beautiful as most of Europe, so advanced in the arts of living, so far progressed in the devices of social order, should destroy by a stroke of the sword that beauty, that comfort, that order—it was one of those unthinkable thoughts. Mankind would muddle through somehow. The weight of armaments was, of course, a grievously hard thing, economically speaking. But perhaps those very armaments would pay for themselves by securing peace.

And then—it came—violently, univer-

sally, malignantly. As I write, it has gone on for two months; and even our vision of a quick war, the one blessing we thought we perceived in the beginning, is shattered. If we can prophesy anything it is that this war must drag on until somebody is exhausted. But already it has gone so far that the American observer, seeing it all externally, may realise what modern war is, and how the reality squares with that ideal of "purging nations."

Let me begin with the outward and obvious manifestation of war, the fighting. In some old history book I remember this line concerning Grant's operations in the Wilderness campaign: "There was none of the pomp and parade of war; only its horrible butchery." Those glorious, dashing cavalry charges beloved by the poets, those tossing plumes and sounding brass bands which lured our youth to the colours in old days—they are not visible along the Marne or the Aisne. The mentor of modern war is not your plumed *beau sabreur*; he is a cold, exact man of science who butchers by the book. Your modern army is an orderly arrangement of grey-

clad or brown-clad men, equipped with the last word in modern scientific instruments of carnage, directed, like a section gang, by the whistle, killing or getting killed soberly, mechanically. Your modern battle is not a day's affair or a two-days' affair: an assembly in the morning, a harangue about glory or the grave, a few hours of hell, a retreat, a long gathering of force and strength for the next battle. It is solid, continuous, deadly slugging, day after day, week after week, until men cease to care for the hazard of life and death through sheer exhaustion, until regiments fade out through sheer hæmorrhage.

So it has been up to now; and so it will continue to the end. The true war correspondents of this struggle are the soldiers themselves; the formal writers on war are observing only at a distance, getting only glimpses of the fighting, and those by accident. It is the soldiers' letters home as printed in the English, French, German, and Belgian newspapers, which give the human story. And these brave, illusioned, worn-out boys record not the glories of the charge, but the fatigues between assaults,

the price by which they gain a half-mile of ground, and the terrible sights at the end. I shall not drive this home by example; that way madness lies.

Yet, after all, as one of the complaisant protagonists of warfare has pointed out, war does not consist wholly of slaughter and of the piled-up dead. It is a series of moves and acts, from the commencement of hostilities to the conclusion of peace. The slaughter in the trenches is only one aspect of it. War must be treated as a whole. Let me take him at his word, and consider—in so far as any one man can now consider—the state of Europe at the beginning of October, 1914.

In all of central Europe, as America knows by now, the young men, the men capable of playing a vigorous part in anything, are all at the Front; in England alone is there youth at home or on the streets. Production, the business of feeding, clothing, and sheltering the world, of providing its comforts and refinements, has virtually ceased; and the chief end of such manufacture as remains is the production of war materials. We speak

of war as destructive, and we think, when we speak, of burned towns, blown-up bridges, wrecked railroads. We do not take into account, at first, the toll of factories, and workshops which lie rusting—the waste of idleness.

Perhaps of all central Europe, Germany has least felt the wastage of this war; for, except in east Prussia, she has so far been uninvaded. Yet from end to end of Germany most factory doors are closed and the machinery stands immovable in grease, because the men are gone to war. From Aix to the Polish border, she is virtually producing nothing except the eternal war materials—which are waste because their end is wastage—and the necessities which the stay-at-homes must have even in war time. Distribution has been pared to a minimum; the Government has been able to dispense with only enough railroad men to satisfy the most pressing needs. Of course, the fine side of life, the sportive side, has gone by the board, though the cafés and plays and cinema shows are still running, I believe, in Berlin and the other larger centres. A border city like Aix

furnishes such a spectacle as history never saw before. One or two hotels are running half-force. Their cooks and waiters are all old men. The rest are closed. Half the shops are closed. On the streets you see no young men, save a policeman or a uniformed railroad official here and there. A few cabs hang round the station; they are manned by bent, grey-haired drivers. Down the streets files an eternal procession of women, carrying bundles home from shop or market because there is no delivery. And Germany, I repeat, has perhaps felt the shock least of any Continental nation, because she has not been invaded and because she has prepared, with all her thoroughness, for this very event.

Add to this check of the industrial wheels a deal of active misery, and you have Belgium and northern France. In Belgium, production stopped when the Germans came; poor Belgium, which before the war was one of the busiest workshops of the world, is down to the merest hand-to-mouth retail trade. Beyond all that she has suffered an enormous visible and immediate loss of property

from the destruction of her villages, her roads, her bridges, her railways; the refugees, out of money, out of supplies, out of work, have crowded into the towns, there to live on what charity, what public support, they may find. The Belgians are coming up handsomely; but the problem is nearly unsolvable. Invaded and shut off, they have no imports. There was only half a harvest this year. The invaders commandeered all ready supplies wholesale. These supplies, it is true, have been paid for with orders on the German Government or on the Bank of Paris; but an order on the treasury is one thing, and food is quite another. Already, the tin cup of the newly-made beggar is rattling everywhere in Belgium—and it is only October when I write.

Intensify the state of Belgium, and you have the condition of northern France—fair little northern France, the most gracious country, but yesterday, in all Europe. The armies have trampled it back and forth this month long; where the Belgian villages were merely burned, northern France has been ruined by shell

and shrapnel and rifle volley. The more timid—perhaps the more prudent—have streamed out to increase the misery of villages farther from the line of advance. The remainder are living in huts and cellars, under the shell fire. We shall never know until the war is over, scarcely even then, how many non-combatants have died of battle as a matter of "military necessity." For just as there was never so large a war before, so there never were battles before in a country so thickly inhabited. That the non-combatants should wholly escape were impossible.

The rest of France, again, is like Germany —only more so. Having a smaller population, she has made greater drafts on her vigorous men. She has been able to spare for industry only those who make the eternal war materials. The silk factories of Lyons, the steel factories of Clermont, except in so far as they make military supplies, are rusting. The lace-makers have rested from their bobbins; they are needed in the fields to gather the crops which the men left.

Life, with the women, the children, the

old men, is down to primitive food, primitive shelter, and primitive warmth. Luxuries are no more, or they have been sent to the army. Even the necessities are being skimped—for the army, always the army. The army needs blankets; the women and children of frugal, close-living France will sleep cold this winter. The army needs flannels; the women and children of France will walk cold this winter. They are even splitting their pillows to send those comforts to the hospitals. And in France, as in Belgium, the winter of national hardship is but just begun.

And though by some miracle there were men enough in France and Germany to provide these giant armies and also keep the factories going, production in much of Europe would still be running to a vanishing-point, owing to a factor which no one, except possibly the Germans, considered much before the war. I refer to the intense intercommunication of nations. While the official classes of Europe have bickered and intrigued, have planned wars and averted wars, have built up their

incredible armaments toward this very crisis, the people have unconsciously been working toward that dream of the altruist, the United States of Europe. Commerce has grown ; intercommunication has grown ; the internationalist, holding allegiance to one country, having residence in all, has increased from a " specimen " to an absolute type. Above all, what might be called the interchange of processes is enormous. This suit that I am wearing was woven, I believe, in England. But its dyes came from Germany and its linings from France ; its buttons were turned in America, and its thread was spun in Scotland. And that is only a simple and primitive example. Any manufacturer can multiply examples from his own factory.

And for this aspect in the wastage of war, England is the exemplar—England who still has young men on the streets, still runs automobiles, still keeps theatres and cafés open, and still, above all, maintains her overseas traffic.

England, I think, began fully to appreciate this intercommunication of nations at

that day, after the outbreak of the war, when she had closed her Stock Exchange, ordered her moratorium, and prepared to face her hardest struggle. Up to that time, no statistician, and scarcely an economist, had taken full stock of the enormous part played in the world's commerce, and especially in England's commerce, by "bills of exchange." I mean just this: The man who mines and ships a load of coal at the colliery mouth, gets a bill of lading which becomes money. The bank, to all intents and purposes, in normal times, discounts it; and business proceeds. Now this "paper," in the case of England, came from all over the world, from inimical Germany and Austria and isolated Russia as well as from the English colonies and neutral America. The banks stopped discounting it as soon as the war broke out, and commerce halted, for the time being, as short as though all the money in the world had been withdrawn from circulation. The Government announced that it would liquidate this paper up to two hundred million pounds. It began payment, and it stopped short because a billion dollars

would not nearly meet the emergency. I am not writing of the state of British finance; that is a story by itself. But I mention this situation as an example of the wide intercommunication between nation and nation.

England pulled herself together, of course; and with the seas open, she began to resume commerce, in some fashion, with her colonies and the neutral nations. Manufacture went on, hectically in some lines which have intimately to do with the war, such as cloth and blanket weaving, and slackly in others. Whereupon, a new exemplar arose.

In the most unexpected, the most perplexing fashion, the manufacturers of England found themselves hampered by the need of certain materials for which they had formerly counted on the Continent. To mention a small example: Great Britain had imported all her safety lamps for coal mining—part from Austria, part from Belgium. Austria and Belgium are both non-productive and shut off from England; as the supply of lamps breaks up, the English must find some way of

manufacturing them at home. Again, England has looked mainly to Germany for her supply of carbons for electric lamps. Such carbons as she manufactures now will only supply the Government demand for searchlights. So she must expand at all costs her carbon factories.

Indeed, those industries which make use of chemicals in their processes are the trades which best illustrate this process. Germany, with her talent for the exact sciences, has nearly taken chemical manufacture unto herself. In certain lines, she has a monopoly. And the lack of these chemicals manifests itself in the most curious ways. Cyanide is necessary to the reduction of low-grade gold ores. Gold reduction all over the empire is bound to languish until the English find a way of making cyanide—for that branch of chemistry has been solely in German hands.

The chemicals which put the finish on certain special qualities of metal all came from Germany; here again the English must find a way. The Germans have made most of the aniline dyes; and these dyes enter into a score of English manufacturing

processes; English chemists must set themselves to learn dye-making. And most of these new industries can be merely temporary, since the Germans have ruled in the chemical trades because of native adaptability and natural resources; when the war is over they will doubtless continue to make the best and cheapest chemicals, just as the English will continue to weave the best woollen fabrics.

In the Napoleonic wars—which furnish the only parallel for this crisis—England felt at first only the loss of her commerce, a loss which she regained as the struggle went on. In production, she was almost, if not quite, self-sufficient. The United States of Europe, the commercial solidification of the world, had scarcely begun. The Pan-European War of 1914 found the movement well on its way. And I mention this present perplexity of England as a new waste and a new burden of war.

So much for the present physical state of Europe, as nearly as any one observer can see it in these newsless, shut-in times, when observation is limited to what little of countries the armies and the censors

permit one to see, and information from the closed countries proceeds by the mouth-to-ear conversation of released Americans. And now for the mental state :

I was not long in Europe before I realised that I was living amid mental and psychic abnormality ; that the soul of the world had changed more than the face of the world. Once perceived, this, I think, has become a greater dread to me than carnage and destruction and active grief. In six weeks I have scarcely heard, either on the high seas which carry in and out of Europe, or on the solid land, a genuine, natural laugh. The lines of the faces run downward ; people tend to move by jerks ; conversation goes back always, inevitably, to the war—the chances of this nation or that, the settlement if " we " win, the reckoning if " we " lose.

Already, scarcely one man or woman in Europe but has felt a near or remote grief for someone who was. I, the alien, met on the steamer, going over, a pleasant little Frenchman, full of intelligent conversation and good stories. A friend came in from Paris yesterday. " By the

way," he said, "Gorot's dead—killed at Soissons." On that same boat was an English officer, a zealous player of deck games. Yesterday his face shone out on me from an illustrated weekly newspaper with the legend, "Killed in action." I owe gratitude to a German officer whom I met in Belgium. I hear from Brussels that he is dead. All this in my short, superficial acquaintance—how much more in the acquaintance of any European! In denuded France, in sobered Germany, the women are streaming daily to the Bürgermeister or the Maire to get the lists—when the Government gives them out. Those who have seen these spectacles tell me that there is little weeping when the news comes; only this woman or that covers her face with her shawl and goes home. They live in the attitude of expecting the worst.

Under this whole nervous state, this repressed hysteria, lies fear, nobly or ignobly borne, according to the individual character. Even Germany, who, if we are to believe the gossip, is bearing herself with such savage fortitude, gallantry and

confidence, must feel this sense of fear; for Germans and Frenchmen and Englishmen are made of the same elements, with a slightly different mixture and finish. If her army gives way on the western border, Germany sees devastation—the same devastation that has blighted northern France. If her army gives way on the eastern border, she sees—the Cossacks. France knows that defeat on the Marne means all France made like northern France. By night, darkened London looks up into the skies, where the searchlights keep watch of brassy heavens, and thinks on fleets of Zeppelins. And all these peoples, as they measure their food, think on starvation.

This fear in the ignoble takes the form of malice, hatred and all uncharitableness. It is the basis of the threats among the German people against England—" sordid, hypocritical England "—who is fighting not for them but against them. It shows itself in the wholesale acceptance of rumours concerning atrocities. It inspires gross caricatures of the traits, the customs, and the morals of hostile peoples. It

breaks out in vitriolic attacks on persons and personalities. It is part, in short, of the "purification by war!"

The purification by war! It seems scarcely worth while for an American to refute that doctrine, so far from most of our ideals. Yet it is the doctrine whose continuance in Europe has made possible this calamity of the nations—it is the philosophical basis of the whole struggle. Never was it so hard for the world to guess its future as now; but it is possible that in our generation we may find "the religion of valour" cropping out among us, and shall have need to refute it by this great exemplar.

Of course, war does call out the heroic virtues; in so far, the Zabern is right. It is heroic for the conscript, made a soldier just because he was born in Germany or France between 1885 and 1898, to walk uncomplainingly to death. It is heroic for the older men, not called to the colours, to volunteer. It is heroic for the shopkeeper's assistant of London, knowing what goes on along the Marne and the Aisne, to join the army that he may

preserve the ideal of empire to another man's sons. It is heroic for the women to let them go. The great, quiet charities—Frenchwomen giving their scanty goods to clothe the soldiers, Belgians feeding Belgians, gently-bred German women working the fields—they are heroic, too. And suffering and grief are in themselves heroic. He who has not suffered lacks something of full stature.

However, take a parallel: there is none in the world, I suppose, who would advocate renouncing all medicine, scientific or unscientific, and letting cholera, smallpox and bubonic plague do their will. Yet these diseases bring suffering and bereavement and grief, with all the nobility they apply. They bring also the chance for heroism.

There was Father Damien; there are the thousand uncanonised Damiens of the medical profession.

"Ah, yes," answers the purification-by-war theorist, "but there's a distinction between courage and valour. Ours is the religion of valour, not merely courage." Valour, as I understand it, is merely

courage plus human opposition—or courage plus the sporting spirit, if you will. And to make a religion out of the sporting spirit seems quite a new thing in the world.

He makes another point, this advocate of the new religion which has produced this conflagration in Europe. The world grows self-indulgent in times of peace. Extravagance beyond moderation or measure has become a rule of European life, as of American life. It is good, it is ennobling, to paralyse commerce for a time, to cut the world down to bare necessities, to reduce gross stomachs and flabby hips, to force people into giving. He talks there much mis-applied sense. All classes above the bare margin of existence had been living too high and fast. But the very class which talks this theory is the class which resents bitterly and militantly any attempt to cut down its own goods and luxuries for the benefit of the poor and humble. And the classes, whether in Germany, Austria or Russia, who forced this war on the conscripts, will not do the economic suffering!

And there, I think, you come down to

the basis of the whole " religion of valour." It is essentially aristocratic. It belongs to the upper class, divinely endowed with the right to say what is good for the lower classes—whether soft ease with peace, or agony and unease with war. It is undemocratic; and since democracy, rightly understood, is Christianity, it is also un-Christian.

Is it a dream in which we live? Six months ago, how strange it would have seemed to me to be writing in this strain, to be refuting such doctrine as this! Yet, I repeat, it has suddenly become the governing doctrine of Europe. As Islam burst on the Middle Ages, this has burst on the modern world. We ourselves, I repeat, may have to reckon with it before we have outlived the next quarter-century. Let us hope, even now; perhaps still the laying-down of arms, the true peace of nations, may follow; perhaps the very triumph of the doctrine may be its destruction, and Christianity, by whose basic principles most of us have presumed to govern our lives, may rise greater than ever out of these ashes.

IV

THE SOUL OF FRANCE

November, 1914

WHAT does it mean ?—this phrase with which we play so glibly—"A nation in arms." There is no imagination in this world, I suppose, so large and vivid that it can grasp the full meaning of the phrase ; it is like trying, in one glimpse, to appreciate the full glory of Niagara. But let us try to see how it goes in that nation which, next to Belgium, is bearing the heaviest toll of this war—France.

To begin with, one must remember certain large facts : by the end of autumn, every able-bodied man in France, excepting only a few classes exempted to run the railroads, the public utilities, the coal mines and the arms factories, had gone with the colours—or France knew the reason why. To grasp this, put yourself

in the place of the Frenchman or the Frenchwoman, and look about you. Take your own family, your own club, your own circle of acquaintances, and subtract all the men between eighteen and forty-five years old; and imagine the rest.

If you would understand the soul of France, you must remember another thing: the Republic—which means the whole people, not the military caste—no more wanted war than the United States wants war to-day. In the generation since 1870, she had set about to achieve real civilisation. Thrifty, careful, honourable, her citizens had learned the art of living, of getting a pound of enjoyment from a groat of expense. In her own peculiar fashion she had prospered greatly. She held—at least until recently—the gold reserve of Europe. She was so self-sufficient that she could have been blockaded at any time and missed no essential except cotton and a little meat. Though she had much plain living, she had little poverty; though, outside of Paris, she knew no flaunting extravagance, she also knew little squalor. As the world ap-

preciates, she was the home of all high intellectual refinement.

What this generation asked of the future —all it asked—was that armed Europe should leave France alone to live her own life and have her own national career in her own way. For that purpose, she maintained an army which grew every year into a more distressing burden. Alsace-Lorraine, it is true, rested at the bottom of her thought, a sad, romantic dream. But from those who understand France, as I of course do not understand her, I know that she would never have spilled the blood of her sons to regain territory. Alsace-Lorraine had grown to be a political rallying-cry, a piece of chauvinism like our own " bloody shirt " after the Civil War.

When the storm gathered; when, out of a summer of accustomed security, the long tension of Europe broke; when, on a day's notice, son, father and husband went out with the colours, it was not for Alsace-Lorraine nor any other dream of national greatness, but for the final quiet of France. They went, it is true, in a

mood of that hatred which gives no quarter. But their final aim was peace, and not war.

I think that even France's adversaries admit this in their hearts. For this war you can blame Germany and Austria and Russia, with their dreams of racial expansion. You can even make out a case against England. But save little Belgium alone, none is so guiltless of these rivers of blood as smiling, loyal, practical France.

It does not matter that in the first stages of that grim, prepared Germanic rush towards Paris, some of France's citizen legions broke and ran. We have our own battle of Bull Run to show how raw civilian levies fear the guns in their first engagement. This was a democratic army. She could not develop the stern tradition of discipline, which flourishes best in an aristocracy. The point is that the " emotional " French, the " mercurial " French, the French who were supposed to be great in success and little in defeat, rallied, smashed their way to victory, and settled down to that grim business of machine-slaughter in the entrenchments

along the river. No pomp and glory in this fighting, as in old battles; only the hard work of a day labourer, the soul-endurance of a criminal going to the gallows.

Behind these men of France the nation settled down without emotion, save the universal emotion of hatred for the enemy and of sorrow that this thing had to be. In September, when the line still held along the rivers, and in October, when the line had lengthened to the sea, I found France in a state of quiet, sad resolution which made the savage enthusiasm of Germany seem a light thing. It bore the stamp of a nation hoping for victory, half expecting victory, but, in the last emergency, determined on death. The *blague* was gone out of France, along with the gaiety; all her picturesque foolishness, all her cynicisms, by which she deceives one concerning her deeper emotions, were covered over with this genuine feeling, as the *risqué* posters of Paris have been covered over since the war began with the red, white and blue of the Republic. In short, she had cast

off the superficial qualities, as every people, I suspect, casts them off in the pinch. There remained only the nobly human.

Externally, France looks the part. Beyond the fighting zone the roads, so lively in normal times with diligences, country carts and automobiles, are very lonely. Most of the automobiles are at the Front on the business of war; the rest may not run save on the business of Government. As the world knows by this time, four out of five business houses and shops of Paris are boarded up—closed for the war. In the provincial cities, in the small towns, the ratio is even greater. In old times, a French town, whatever its hidden sins against hygiene, kept its streets and pavements immaculately clean. Now the roads are dirty, the stations littered with papers and refuse, the pavements reek. Street cleaning is not among the necessities; and all France is down to bare necessity.

The railroads still maintain a show of public service; but trains run irregularly. Sometimes for several days in succession they are hours behind the schedule or

stop altogether. By that, the passengers perceive, through the veil which shrouds all public affairs in the Europe of these days, that there is a new movement of troops toward the Front, or that the wounded are coming through.

In all France, from Paris clear south to the Midi, that arrival of the wounded is the one event of these days. By policy, France sends her wreckage of war as far as possible from the invasion. Long ago, she filled up the Midi. The hospital line of the torn and dying has been creeping steadily northward, choking the public buildings and even the schoolhouses in all the central provinces. Your crawling train, very dirty with the universal neglect of the times, stops overlong at a station. You look out. Young men wearing brassards, nurses in the white, floating headdress of the French Red Cross, are taking off the wounded. Through a crowd of silent, sympathetic boys and women pass the stretchers, each capped by the pale, lined face of a French youth, stolid with that second stage of grievous injury wherein a man does not care, wherein emotion

and feeling become subsidiary to the job of keeping alive.

The troops, the concern of keeping up this war, first; the wounded, the concern of repairing its wreckage, second; after which, France has time and energy left for that fine French sentiment of family. Everywhere, the officials and officers are cutting red tape to let mothers and sisters and wives quickly reach the wounded boys.

I saw almost none of the old-time gesticulating enthusiasm in warring France. The regiments going out from Paris and Rouen toward the Front, marched through crowds as stolid, to all appearance, as the crowds of a London Sabbath. I was in Havre on the day when the Belgian Government, driven from pillar to post, arrived at its new capital. The mayor had asked the people to turn out and give the stranger welcome. The people of Havre appeared as though they were waiting for a funeral. Once, however, I saw a French crowd which seemed infused with that sense of drama in the commonplace which marked, in better times, such

events as the arrival of an express train. On the road between Paris and Dieppe a "special" passed us. Heads craned out of windows, chatter and animation suddenly ran down the whole line. These people, it appeared, were going down to Dieppe to see their wounded relatives in the base hospital!

We had, indeed, two such pilgrims of sentiment on our own train. One of them, a man with a fine, keen face, turned out to be Foran the cartoonist. His son, nineteen years old, a dragoon, had been shot in the neck. Foran exhibited with pride the bullet which did it. And every gesture of Foran's showed his relief. Also, there was a beautiful old Frenchwoman who came from Tours to see her son. She ruffled with pride. He had been wounded for France! But to an American woman who got her confidence she told a different story.

"Think!" she said, "his thigh is broken, his poor thigh! He cannot be sent back! He has done his duty—and I have him still!"

There is not in France, I suppose, a

woman so lonely that she has not someone, be he only a boy from her first communion class, out there on the line. Now the French, for all they have lost their surface emotionalism, retain that quality common to the emotional of showing feeling on their faces. And those faces, as I watched them pass, fell into three types of expression. In Paris there were a few who looked relieved, like Foran and the old woman from Tours. Someone near and dear had been wounded or captured; there might be others out there in Hell, but the dearest had escaped! There were the faces, surmounting black dresses or knots of black ribbon, which bore all the marks of recent tears. Finally—and this was by far the most common class—there were the faces drawn with tense anxiety, the anxiety of waiting for a blow.

That is the kind of anxiety which expects the worst. Unlike Germany and England, France does not publish death lists. Any relative of a French soldier may register at the *Mairie* a request for news of the worst. Each French soldier goes into action with a numbered tag of

identification about his neck. When he dies, in action or in hospital, this is taken from him and compared with his number in the official lists. From the military government in Bordeaux to his own district the news goes by post. Waiting for the mails is anxious business in these days! The process is slow and, in such a war, necessarily inaccurate. There are places along the great line where the piled up dead, German with French, lie rotting, because no one can reach them under the steady fire of the guns. All along, of course, the Germans as well as the French have been burying the French dead. And the Germans send back no tags to Bordeaux.

Though mails are not running regularly from the Front, though in certain places where the military situation is delicate, privates are forbidden to write at all, most soldiers manage by hook or crook to send letters home. When the letters stop—the family fears the worst. There may be a black, blank wait of a month; and then a soldier's letter to some neighbour, as likely as the notice from the

Mairie, brings the worst of news. I know one French family whose only son fell in Alsace in the first attacks of the war. There was a two-months' silence, and then, in October, they learned from a wounded neighbour that he was dead. All France knows that, in the strictest sense, no news usually means bad news.

The chambermaid at the hotel where I lived in Paris was a pretty little daughter of the Midi, just turned nineteen. When she entered my room on the first morning her face bore the mark of a heavy strain. The next morning her facial lines had smoothed themselves out to normal. She had heard from her husband in the meantime, it appeared. He was the valet of the hotel. When the call came they were but six months married. She had, besides, a brother, three brothers-in-law, and innumerable cousins with the colours. But her anxieties, naturally, centred on the One. Now he had drawn a melancholy bit of luck. His company had lost heavily before Soissons; he had borne himself bravely; he found himself promoted from private to company adjutant—equivalent

to our first sergeant. In that position, he could write often. She got letters three or four times a week.

When I visited Paris again I found Berthe a wraith. She had not heard, now, for a week. Two more days of this, and she smiled again. She had received her letter. The regiment had been on the move; that was why he could not write.

"Where?" I asked.

"Towards Armentières, I think," she said. I did not tell her, little Berthe who did not understand military affairs, that the murderous fighting of this great campaign had shifted toward the Armentières line.

No family in France is without its vivid, tragic personal concern in that struggle out there to the north, and no family in France is without its story. An old woman, long an invalid, died in Rouen. When her only son went out with the reserves they concealed from her the fact that there was even a war. On the day of her funeral came the letter from the *Mairie*: the son had died in action. In a Norman château dwelt a lady of quality.

Her husband was a captain. Her maid's husband was in the ranks as a private. One morning the maid brought in the letters. There was a letter from the *Mairie* for each of them. . . .

And there have been joyful surprises, too. Sometimes those soldier letters from the Front which bear, ahead of the official notices, the news that Jean or Jacques is dead, make their mistakes. And again those long silences, interpreted by the over-anxious as meaning death, mean only capture.

There is a deal of subterranean communication between the belligerent peoples. Letters, somehow, filter through from Germany and Austria to France and England. And now and then a mysterious, unsigned message comes from Lucerne or London, or even Rome, to say that Private So-and-so in this or that regiment is a wounded prisoner at Aix, or is an unwounded prisoner grubbing beet-root along the Rhine. Then there is a family of Paris happy after long strain—or comparatively happy. For one safe soldier, alas! does not entirely lift the strain in times

when all the young men, and many of the middle-aged men, are gone to war.

To me, indeed, those middle-aged soldiers, grizzled in the hair, a little tight in the waist-line, dragged out from counter and desk or raped from bench and plough to don képi and red trousers and fight with the Territorials, give one of the chief pathetic touches. The Territorials, at the time when I last saw France, had been called out up to the age of forty-six. Typically, of course, they were men of family, settled down in life, far beyond the age when one thinks of war as romance. The Frenchman of the black type takes on an early appearance of age. Many of the pleasant, polite old fellows who inspected my *laissez-passers* along the roads looked like Grand Army veterans.

I saw a regiment of these oldsters taking their ease on a pleasant Sunday in October. The Government had set them to digging trenches in a town not far from Paris. They were recruited from the capital; wherefore their wives and babies had come out by train to visit them on the holiday. French fashion, these family

groups strolled through the fields, picking flowers and enjoying the landscape. When the families parted that night, these French were for once emotional.

I took this at the time for a superfluous bit of drama, because these Territorials are nominally home defenders, and the enemy was then held safe to the north. Perhaps it was not quite superfluous after all. At Calais, a few weeks later, the fog of war lifted enough for us to hear that two divisions of Territorials had broken at La Bassée and had caused great temporary embarrassment to the Allied line. And some of these grey-haired soldiers proved it by coming wounded into the hospitals. Poor old boys, past their legitimate days for war! Why, with first-line troops available farther south, older men were thrown into the line, no civilian knows. But down they go with the boys, these fine, middle-aged, settled Frenchmen —the most intelligent class of men in the world, I suppose.

This France away from the lines has become a world of women, of old men, of the infirm. Paris, by the end of

October, had rebounded from her first shock and from her panic at the approach of the Germans. Of evenings the pavements ran full. Two or three cinema shows had opened along the Boulevard des Italiens.

That struck me, by the way, with a violent sense of contrast. Paris, the playhouse of the world—Paris down to moving picture shows, exactly like one of our small Middle Western cities! Indeed, even those amusements found but slender patronage. There was no music; France in her present mood does not tolerate even playing on the piano.

The crowds simply drifted soberly down the streets; and they gave a queer, composite effect of physical weakness. For, excepting a few foreign residents, there were on the streets only women, old men and those narrow-chested weaklings passed by the army surgeons, known as *réformes*. In these times, one learns by the removal of the background how large is the foreign population of Paris. But even this touch of lusty young foreign manhood is lacking to the pro-

vincial cities. There no one walks the streets of nights; there, only those shops which minister to bare necessities keep open of days; there, save for a few Government officials, one sees no men of lusty youth or middle age. The population has shrunk to children, to boys—and to women.

France has always been fortunate in her efficient, planning, saving, understanding women, partners rather than wives. If the "little French stocking" paid the indemnity of the Franco-Prussian war, if it built the bank balance which controlled the finances of Europe, Madame rather than Monsieur is the responsible person. Now, with the men gone, Madame has taken up the business of the shop and the farm. In the little wayside groceries and village stores, she is selling out such stock as remains, and trying to get more stock by virtue of railroads concerned mainly with the business of war. The most pathetic inanimate things in war-time France are the signs, now stained, torn and bedraggled, advertising week-end trips, automobiles, or those

articles which minister to the pretty follies of women. " A sorrow's crown of sorrows is remembering happier things."

Next in order for pathos are those little shops with half the shelves bare, and the rest broken by spaces where this or that necessity has been sold out. Behind the counter sits Madame, knitting, sad-eyed or apprehensive as the news has come to her. Yet still she keeps that eye out for the franc! That is her business in this war—to make the wheels of everyday life go round.

Madame on the farm has been managing, with such decrepit horses as the army has been able to spare, to get the fall ploughing done. Here, too, the Government is helping, for in this war of exhaustion the nation must have harvests. The Naval Reserve and certain detachments of Territorials have been told off to help in this work. But, after all, the chief force behind the plough is Madame the *paysanne.* As I watched the sturdy middle-aged peasant women, the fresh young peasant girls, steering their ploughs along the furrows, I was troubled with a

vague memory. It came to me at last—the old days in the West when the pioneer woman put her hand to the plough with the men. Extremes meet curiously in this time when our higher civilisation has been put to such a test of primitive valour as the old West never dreamed.

Housekeeping is down to strict necessity and even lower. France will feed herself, unless she be wholly invaded—no fear on that score. Even though the British navy should lose hold of the seas, leaving her without imports, she can exist from her farms. But here and there she feels the pinch already. The sugar supply has begun to fall short. Salt is scarce. Of certain perishable foods, on the other hand, there is an embarrassment of plenty. France has exported northward much fruit and great supplies of vegetables. With the export trade cut off, apples are rotting on the trees and vegetables are spoiling for sheer glut of the market.

The French consider mineral water almost a staple of life. In some towns, notably in Paris, one could get mineral water in October; in some it was not to be

had for any money. The stock of candy is nearly gone ; there is a shortage in many of the condiments by which French cooks make anything palatable. On the coasts, at least, there is still a supply of fish—the Government has for the present exempted the fishermen so that they can do their share in feeding France. Away from the sea-coast, the supply of fish depends upon the uncertain movement of the trains.

More serious is the coal shortage : France must go pretty cold this winter. The Germans held all summer and autumn the coal mines of the northern strip. The rest of the mines, their workmen exempted as a military necessity, must serve first of all the navy and the arms factories. Even at that, coal is a bulky burden to the railroads, which are running irregularly. Everywhere the peasants are stripping the last branches from the trees in order to keep the pot boiling this winter. Yet Madame goes on, in her serious French fashion, making the best of what she has. If it be only black bread and cabbage soup—it is for France.

"The little French stocking," which Madame has filled—it serves France well in these ghastly days. France has, of course, her ne'er-do-wells who would be poor in any land. But your typical French mechanic has his reserve in bank; and typically that reserve is keeping his family while he fights out on the long frontier.

The Government, it is true, makes its regular allowance to the families of soldiers —a franc and a quarter a day to the wife and an additional sum for every child. Yet the Government has been astonished, I understand, to find how little of this allowance has been used. The mayor of a southern city told me that not more than a third of the women entitled to this bounty had claimed it. In this need the women give it back to France.

And the charity of your Frenchwoman; and the constant call on her charity! Of course, since a nation is composed of all sorts and conditions of people, there remain always the constitutionally selfish women, the constitutionally frivolous women. France holds in her border

such women as that *mondaine* who drove up to a Red Cross hospital in a natty Red Cross uniform and, upon being asked to help with the wounded, responded that it wasn't exciting enough there—she wanted to get under the guns. France includes such women as those two whom an officer just from the firing line heard discussing in the Paris tube the fashionable colour for this winter—whereupon the officer broke in with :

" Mesdames, the colour of France this winter will be black ! " She includes also those wives of certain small towns in the interior who have rebelled at quartering troops from distant provinces because they did not like the ways of these guests. But such women are the exception, not the rule. The rest—they are giving, giving, giving.

They have need to give. The northern strip of France, her most thickly settled district, is in German hands. Part of the people have stuck to their houses, burrowing in the cellars as the shell fire has swept over them ; the rest have swarmed south. Those pathetic processions of

refugees have choked the roads of western Europe all this autumn.

Much of what was Belgium is in a state of migration to England, to Holland, but mainly to France. By the end of October the French Government was transporting shiploads of these *émigrés* from Calais and the other northern ports to the south, where they were forced to dispute with the wounded for bedroom in the public buildings. For the rest—the women of France have taken them into spare rooms, cowsheds and outbuildings. They arrive weary, exhausted with grief and misery, and penniless, even those who were well-to-do six months ago. Madame must find a way to keep them fed.

Those refugees are the special pathos of this war. After all, the dead are the dead. They went into it nobly; and it was soon over for them. But these living exemplars of misery! Beyond their miseries stretch their anxieties; they, like all the rest, have their relatives on the line.

And beyond all, they have certain griefs peculiar to this situation. In the con-

fusion, the panic, the thousand and one unforeseen calamities of war, families have become separated; all over France are parents searching for children, and children for parents. Most Parisian newspapers carry in these days only one kind of advertisements—column after column of small personals wherein Madame X, refugee, asks for news of her brother's family, separated from her at Roye, or M. Y. begs for information of his daughter, last heard from in Rheims.

France knows another appeal to charity which the superficial would scarcely perceive. Though all the young men have gone to war, really because all the young men have gone to war, there is a deal of unemployment. When a factory closes for want of able-bodied men, it throws out of work the women and the old men. Middle-class women have been obliged to dispense with servants; there is much suffering in this class, spite of public aid. Here, too, Madame, with her hoarded reserve in the little French stocking, must help.

South of Paris lies a château, an estate

almost patriarchal. The master is an officer, gone to the war; Madame is left in charge. She has filled the stables, stripped of their fine horses, with refugees from northern France and Belgium. She has given the plain clothes in all the family wardrobe to keep them warm. She has stripped her beds to cover them of nights. So far, she has managed to feed them. This woman has kept all her servants, though mostly without wages; and they have accepted the terms.

Many of the refugees, housed at last after weeks of wandering, collapsed when they reached this haven. Also, there were three women among them near their time with child. In many districts, the physicians have all gone to the war, either as surgeons or as plain soldiers. Here, by good fortune, lived an American physician who saw the sick through. In this estate of refugees, the necessities and comforts of life have been queerly distributed. Once, there was no salt to be had for several days. Again, there was a shortage of coffee. All these cares for the hungry and the sick, all these shortages,

are Madame's concern. She is a busy woman. And yet she walks like the rest in constant apprehension of what to-morrow's mails may bring!

In the intervals between their other cares, the women knit—knit eternally and to better purpose than those Parisian women who knitted about the guillotine when heads were falling. Winter is coming on. It will be cold campaigning along the Great Line. The boys will need warm stockings and mufflers. The great spinning districts of the north being in German hands, the supply of yarn is falling short. Madame is ravelling her knitted articles of household adornment, and even her petticoats for yarn—symbol of the last ounce of effort for France.

It was one of these knitting women who summed up for me all the womanhood of France in this period of tragic stress. I had stopped at an inn on the road between Havre and Caudebec. The waitress laid down her knitting as she rose to serve me. When she had attended to my wants, she took it up again. She was of the blond, Norman type, a comely

girl enough. She was dressed in black, and the outlines of her eyes were blurred. In her pose over the knitting, in every move of her, appeared a divinity of grief—a Madonna quality.

I watched her a long time surreptitiously before she called up a memory. Two years before I had put into this inn with a gay automobile party. This very maid had served us—and slanged us. She was the French version of the lively, impudent American waitress who keeps her wits sharp by bandying repartee with travelling men, the type which our playwrights love. Now, she was doing a man's work as the hotel porter as well as her woman's work, doing it all in a fog of grief, and finding time between grief and work to knit for the Republic. I suppose that war such as this, with its wholesale machine-made murder, renders most men brutes, at least for the time. The barbarities have not been monopolised by one nation. But it renders women divine.

And not the least admirable thing about France in her period of stress is the manner in which the women keep their

griefs to themselves—their spiritual pluck. Families, they tell me, have concealed the loss of sons even from their nearest neighbours. Where all must suffer, it is ignoble to indulge grief publicly. A little salesgirl in a Parisian cigar shop was engaged; they should have been married in the autumn. The war took him away. A communicative American used to chat with her as he bought his morning cigar. He knew her story.

"Any news?" he asked one morning—and then caught full sight of her face and stopped.

"*Non, monsieur, pas de nouvelles,*" she said, and looked quickly down at her work. Then he noticed for the first time that she was sewing black ribbon on her hat!

France, with the same pride in the little schoolhouse which we ourselves know, is keeping up public education. As I write the children are reciting their lessons at Dunkirk, within sound of the guns. Of course, the schoolmasters of military years have gone to the war; but women teachers, in many cases their wives, have

stepped into their places. At Chartres a woman teacher, the wife of the master, appeared one morning in black. She went through with the routine that day to the last detail, though the black meant that he had fallen. But there was work to do—his work.

Now I would be a fool to pretend that I understand the French people; but I believe from what I have seen and through report from every corner of France, borne by those who know them well, that this "gameness," this bearing a disaster bravely and with a determination to see it all through to a finish, is the soul-cast of France. A people is a people, made up from all sorts and conditions of men and women, but France as a whole—both France on-the-line and stay-at-home France—has determined to go through with it nobly to the end.

Hating war to the bottom of my heart, my dreams tormented with its miseries and with the downfall of all good causes which has followed the Madness in Europe, I yet found my spirits better in quiet, closed-up Paris than in that city

across the Channel which was proceeding with her pleasure, keeping her theatres running, attending to her business, almost as though there were no war. I thought at first that it was because Paris, even in her grief, is still Paris; she had in old days the fairly magic faculty of raising one's spirits. She is, I thought, like one of those merry and generous human beings who smile even in mortal illness and in death.

Yet that did not wholly account for Paris; and the full answer came to me not from a Frenchman at all, but from a wounded captain in the British aviation corps whom I helped across the Channel.

His was one of those adventures which would have been almost a world-story six months ago, but which is now become a commonplace. He was "marking" for the batteries at a height of four thousand feet, just inside the danger zone, when a shot from a German aeroplane gun smashed his left spar. The machine wilted and wobbled; with all the skill he had, he kept it on an even keel while he volplaned into his own lines. At a hundred

feet in the air, the aeroplane collapsed, —fortunately for him, over soft ground.

"I ought to be dead," he said cheerfully.

He was very much the man, of course; and also very much the British officer. His one concern was lest, when we took him from boat to train, people should make a fuss over him. "Makes you feel like a fool," he said. But the jar, I take it, had shaken off a little of his native shyness; for after a time he opened up to us the soul of the fighting man.

"When you start," he said, "you make up your mind that you're dead. Of course you will be sooner or later. When they get you, and you're four thousand feet in the air, there's no escape. My case just happens to be a miracle. And after you've fully made up your mind to die, it's a glorious sensation!—You can't know how cheerful a man feels up there!"

Now that glory of the fighting man in his resolution to die explains, I think, what I felt in France. It would be straining truth to pretend that she has reached such an exaltation of courage as

had my aviator, but she approaches this mood. She has made up her mind to go through with it; there is relief in the thought—a certain cheerfulness, unnatural perhaps, but still genuine.

For the psychology of the great European disaster is peculiar. Once, they tell me, the young man who enlisted had the feeling that the bullets wouldn't get him; some other fellow maybe, but not him. In this war of shells which annihilate a whole company at a time, of frontal attacks which drop rank after rank for the poor prize of one trench, of mines which shoot up horror from the ground, of flying machines which drop horror from the air—in this war men enter the ranks with the thought of certain death in their hearts. Joffre knew his people when he issued his general order before the Battle of the Marne.

"Advance as far as you can; when you can no longer advance, stand and die!"

France as an entity had faced the fact of death; there is peace in the thought.

The French have surprised us once in this war. Caught off their guard, in-

sufficiently mobilised, they took a thorough beating and came back to victory, so killing the tradition that they cannot rally from defeat. We have formed a new picture; and they may shatter that, too. I would not be fool enough to prophesy that the strain along the Great Line will not become too heavy—even before these words are printed—for human endurance. But I think not. I think that France is going through with it, strong to the end, whether that end be the restoration of peace to her sons and their sons, or national annihilation.

V

THE BRITISH CALM

December, 1914

"BEHIND the lines in northern France," as the reports in the London newspapers say. Night falling: in the distance the noise of the guns, sounding like occasional taps on a far-away drum. We were passing through a village of Pas-de-Calais now, a hamlet really. One of the old, fortified farms of Normandy flanked it on the northern edge; the turrets flew the Red Cross. By the entrance, two French Territorials stopped me to look at my papers. As always with these French sentries, they smiled when they found that the papers were perfectly regular and seemed disposed to pass the time of day.

"You'll see some Belgians in a minute, if you wait," said one of them. And

presently out of the gathering dusk crept a file of men in blue uniforms and little caps shaped like a Russian sleigh, with yellow tassels nodding on the forepeak.

Those tassels were incongruously, foolishly gay! The rest of their uniforms was so rusty, so dirty, so stained, that it was hard to recognise their original colour. The faces below the nodding tassels wore beards of three months' growth. The lines of these faces drooped, and the military straightness had gone from the shoulders.

I knew, even before my French sentry told me, what I was seeing. These were the men relieved from the line. In these days of eternal fighting—a battle-line three hundred miles long now, a battle which has lasted three months on its eastern wing and a month on its western—men cannot stand the strain for more than a few days. That clamour of the great guns, more than the horror which goes with the work of the guns, makes the strongest man, in time, a nervous wreck.

These regiments had been relieved; they were going to guard the rear. Fresh troops, or troops as nearly fresh as the

Belgians had after their three months of fighting back, back, and ever back, were coming up to replace them in the struggle for the bridge-head at the Yser.

With that American enthusiasm which matches so ill the present grim, grey mood of Europe, I leaned out to cheer them. Few of them even glanced up. One or two waved a feeble gesture of recognition; but the rest simply plodded on. Body and soul, they seemed spent.

It was the next evening, one of those autumn evenings too beautiful for war which have blessed Europe in her year of trial, when another column came crawling toward me through the dust. I caught the dull brown of their uniforms, and we drew up at a crossroads to let them pass. These were the English come, like the Belgians, from action. I waited, expectant, to see how strain of great guns, misery, sight of death and wounds affected them.

They came on at a loose, easy route-step, their rifles carried in every position known to the manual of arms. And the first thing I noted was the absence of

beards. They were shaved! Their uniforms, dusty with the march, were still not caked with mud like those of the Belgians. Every strap, every button, seemed in place.

As they passed, they scrutinised me with cool, Anglo-Saxon glances of distant curiosity. Not a face among them seemed drawn, like the faces of the Belgians. For all they showed it in expression, in gait, or in the carriage of their shoulders, they might have been parading in Hyde Park or shifting positions on the line. Next morning, as I knew from those who have seen the British Army more closely than I, they would rise from a sound night's sleep and go to playing football. And it would not matter to them that since the last game one side or the other had lost a goal-keeper or a forward!

The Belgian came back from action a wreck. That does not mar his soldierly quality when he returns to the line; these sons of disaster, though a little inexpert in the technique of fighting, are great soldiers. Your Frenchman—grim, stark, scientific warrior that he is in action—permits him-

self the luxury of a little emotion when the strain has passed. The German, I understand, comes out singing, if not with spontaneity, at least with determination. The Englishman comes out—a British soldier, serene through it all.

I knew how the Briton takes war; this was the first time I had seen the exemplar. And my mind carried a long way back, to a ring side in San Francisco. Terry McGovern and Young Corbett were fighting for the featherweight championship of the world—McGovern, the Celt, with that blazing quality of nerve and courage common to the Celt, the Gaul, and the Belgian; Corbett, for all his Irish ring name, of pure English stock. Now he had a sharp, stinging tongue, this Corbett. He had beaten McGovern before, he was to beat him again, by insulting him, during their exchanges of repartee in the clinches, to the point of madness. When McGovern grew angry, he threw science to the winds; he would rush, swinging his arms like flails, and Corbett would drop him.

Six rounds of this, and McGovern struck

Corbett from his knees. And, as though infected, Corbett grew angry. His grey eyes snapped : he squared off as McGovern rose. But it was a different kind of anger. It was cold, snaky, sinister, perfectly controlled. It made his blows deadlier, his reflexes faster. He closed in ; he beat McGovern backward to the ropes ; the fight was over. I thought then, I thought again, as I watched the English column crawling down the Pas-de-Calais, that I knew why the Englishman had so long held government over this world. Above all his powers, he has an armour of self-control which nothing can dent.

All of which has been his strength in old times. And all of which, in this supreme struggle for national existence under new world-conditions, comes near to being his weakness. Indeed, the superficial believe absolutely that it is his weakness. I am not so sure.

Let us consider, in that light, the whole state of the Empire militant.

For the two hundred or more years during which the Empire was building, for the hundred years during which it was

the chief political fact in the world, Little England went through a curious selective process. The adventurous, the merry, the enterprising, have drained themselves off to the Colonies; year after year, as the process went on, they left behind the set, the unenterprising, or the conservatively able.

The people, noble or common, who lived upon inherited wealth, the men of high talent or genius who manage the Empire in all its activities, and the parasites upon these classes—they made the social composition of the Island population. The slums of London were, after all, the slums not of one nation but of a whole empire. The vast body of entailed property, such a perplexity in later times, was the entailed property of an empire. Her conservatism, her misery, much of her highest ability, were drawn off into one grouping, half a world away from her real liberalism, her opportunity, and her average ability.

There they sat, secure in their isolation. As the jingo songs kept reminding them, they had little need of armies; the seas and the navy took care of that. Their

national character set also. That quality of self-control hardened into a quality of imperturbability. They tended to regard England, and the institutions of England, as things eternal, not temporal.

Upon that theory, they proceeded with their national life. Their Church had a ritual which changed not. Their universities devoted themselves not to research but to culture—last decoration of a civilisation that is finished for all time. Their captains of industry, their business men, showed, usually, considerable impatience with change in methods; they were half a lap behind Germany and America in adapting themselves to modern conditions and methods. If they kept abreast, if they kept ahead, it was, first, because of their momentum and, second, because of their tremendous natural ability.

The time when English civilisation began to set was a time when individualism dominated the world, when social team work was not yet dreamed on. And above everything else this imperturbable and set personage, the Englishman, was an individual, insistent on his individual rights.

He obeyed, he respected the law which his fathers had made for him ; and it was a law of the individual. When certain miseries in the draining-ground of the empire, together with pressure from a neighbour which understood team work, forced him to change those laws, he yielded only after a tremendous struggle.

Above all, he had become really civilised, too civilised to want war. England showed that in the Boer War, when a large part of the nation protested against what they considered conquest. To hold the Empire —yes, perhaps. The British sense of the sacredness in property made him ready to fight for his right to what he owned. For further conquest—no !

The leaders of British thought knew that some day England must clash with that virile, aggressive, ruthless northern neighbour to whose rulers war had become a religion. They saw, too, that the navy would not be enough to win such a war ; there must be an army. To meet on even terms the thoroughly prepared conscript forces of Germany, it must be a conscript army—England must have general and

thorough military training for their young men.

But the leaders of British thought knew also that the nation would never stand for conscription. Any party which proposed it would have been swamped. Kipling's fulminations; "An Englishman's Home"; Cramb's lectures; occasional alarms from daring conservatives—none of these took effect with the English. They had the Navy, hadn't they? Well, then—

The war is here.

Now there is a fog over all public affairs in Europe, a mist almost impenetrable. It has suddenly become the age of absolute monarchies and of dictatorships. The Press of continental Europe is the servant of these powers; it exists no longer to inform the people and to promote free discussion, but to make the people think what the Government believes they ought to think.

The fog of war lies not only over the lines—which correspondents reach only by accident or deep craft—but over all the activities which have to do with the army; and investigators are most un-

welcome. The history of these times will never be written from the journalism of the times. The battle stories of the War of the Nations will come out in memorials, not in newspaper columns, and the historians will be its reporters.

Yet one catches glimpses here and there; and he learns from them how ill Britain was prepared, not only to present an army for service but to equip and carry on an army. This crisis has brought the downfall of our industrial world, as the British should have known that it would; yet for certain essentials of army supplies they had been depending upon nations which were now their enemies.

Many departments of the Government work were in the hands, not of business men, who could run them as a business, but of retired army officers, who knew only routine method and red tape. At that very time the city was full of the finest executive men in the world; men who were burning with patriotism, longing to do something for England; yet the Empire did not turn to them. The wheels creaked and groaned in all the army supply depart-

ments, in the Red Cross, in the censorship, even, perhaps, in the transport service.

You got glimpses of this process here and there. England, like all the warring nations, reserved the right to commandeer automobiles. In one town the order went forth that all cars of a certain class should be assembled in one place. They were assembled—and lay parked there a week before anyone came to look them over: this at a time when the German automobile transport had already served as a main factor in driving the British and French back from the Belgian border.

Grievously wounded men, "spinal cases" many of them, came back to England across the rough Channel, when they might have found hospital attendance in France. You found that certain regiments of new recruits were suffering for want of blankets, even though the enlightened of England were willing to make any sacrifice for the troops, least of all a little bedding.

The Government, in common with the Continental Governments, announced a policy of public aid for the dependents of soldiers. A month later, you found that

such aid had not yet been distributed in certain parts of London.

Everywhere you saw that policy of "muddle through," which seems to have grown from a reproachful catchword to a creed with certain classes of the English, and the policy of "messing round with the poor," which is the attitude of your upper-class Englishwoman toward the social problem.

The machinery, I say, creaked. But let not an American, with the memory of our Spanish War behind him, grow too critical with the English. It did not grind and stop, as ours did. I have heard slight hints of scandals in army supplies; I scarcely believe them. Some of the tunics which came to the troops were pretty shoddy; but I understand that the Government knew just what it was buying. The right kind of cloth for tunics was lacking at first; inferior qualities must do for the present.

As time went on, you began to perceive that there is something, after all, in the British policy of "muddle through." If their imperturbability had got them into

this fix, that same imperturbability was getting them out of the fix. They did not, like more emotional, more mercurial, or less controlled people, become appalled at the nature of the problem and develop a case of "rattles" or discouragement.

With a kind of unsystematic sense of system, they did what was to be done—the essentials first, the unessentials second.

The new volunteers in the Aldershot camps appeared for drill in the cast-off scarlet uniforms of the regular force, or in no uniforms at all; and so the superficial said: "They haven't even uniforms for their men!" But the army did have rifles for its men. The uniforms were not yet necessary; and in his first week's enlistment the new British soldier was at the butts, learning the A B C of soldiering.

Here and there, when you glimpsed the inside of things, you perceived with what individual efficiency the able men of Great Britain were setting about to supply the deficiency in certain goods which the war had cut off from Great Britain. "I'll tell you how I beat the French," said Wellington once, in effect, "they made

their campaign like a splendid set of harness. When they broke a buckle, they had to send for the harness maker. I made mine out of ropes. When I broke anything, I tied a knot and went ahead." Theirs was and is a harness of ropes. that is the kind of harness they know best. And they have turned out to be great tiers of knots.

With that same imperturbability, the English people faced the prospect of Armageddon. It is easy for an enthusiastic American to misunderstand the British, to take their shyness and self-repression for coldness and indifference. Yet, allowing even that, their refusal to accept the disagreeable fact of war amounted to a national weakness. Believing in England as a thing eternal, it was hard for them to entertain the notion not only of defeat, but even of danger.

In the early days of the German advance the War Office obtained the secret of one of Germany's mechanical devices. "It is unthinkable!" was their comment. Within a week, Germany was making deadly use of that device!

When Von Kluck was striding toward Paris with the speed of a practice march, when Von Hindenburg had annihilated a Russian army in East Prussia, when it looked to most Americans as though Germany might be making good her boasts, the Briton still refused to entertain the thought of defeat, or even of danger. "What about our navy?" he said, or, "Britain's a bulldog," or—this was almost a stereotyped phrase—"It is unthinkable!" The middle class, the commercial class, seemed more concerned in the patriotic duty of getting away German commerce than in the more obvious duty of getting recruits into the army.

"England is asleep," we said, we Americans. We were fooled a little, I allow, by the constitutional lack of surface enthusiasm; but, still, she dozed. And it became almost a fascination to watch her wake up—not as a nation, but by individuals and by sections. Recruiting would proceed steadily; it would slacken; then would come a minor or major disaster, like the loss of the three armoured cruisers, the taking of Antwerp,

the sinking of the torpedo boat at Deal. Next morning, there would be a long line of men in front of all the recruiting offices.

London, the metropolis, filled with those far-seeing men of the upper class who have understood all along, London woke first, of course. She has borne all along more than her proportionate share of enlistment. The suppression of the lights for fear of Zeppelin attacks, the absence of certain omnibus lines, and the presence of officers back from the Front, made her look a little like a city at war.

But just after the fall of Antwerp sent a shiver through enlightened London, I visited the manufacturing district of the North. Manchester, owing to a lack of cotton, was in an industrial crisis. Though the newspapers splashed the war all over their front pages, she remained apparently indifferent. I scanned the notices of the meetings in the hotels, the "futures" of the newspapers. There was only one war meeting announced for the coming week—that one a lecture by Mrs. Pank-

hurst. Business was running briskly at Leeds, which makes woollen goods for the army; but the people were absorbed in that business, and not in war.

The pottery district was absolutely flattened out; factory after factory had drawn all its fires, and there people seemed most concerned with their industrial distress. A week more, an English editor went north to see for himself; and he found the leaven of war working—the Midland counties were waking up.

But at the very time when I found the Midland counties asleep, the superintendent of a steel factory in the iron district had to forbid his men to enlist—the Government most needed them where they were. Some small towns, especially in the North, proceeded on their sleepy way; some, for lack of young men, looked like villages in France.

Individuality, the charm of the Briton, his strength, and his weakness—it came out here. I am told by an Englishman concerned in this business of getting recruits that the secret of those instances where isolated towns see the emergency and

respond to it is usually some individual. A certain town in Surrey has less than five hundred inhabitants. Seventy-nine men have gone from there. The vicar of this parish, it happens, is a retired army chaplain. He saw that all his young parishioners enlisted, or he knew the reason why. The villages where recruiting is almost unknown lag behind, usually, because they lack a leader with the firm religion of patriotism to urge his parishioners, his tenants, or his constituents into the ranks.

As for the remote northern towns, their people, gentry and townsfolk alike, never awake to any national crisis until late in the day. An English member of Parliament tells me that when a new issue, like a mistake in policy or a scandal, arises during a political campaign, it affects London and the South at once, but it scarcely turns a vote in the North. "Unless it's a religious question," he said, "they respond six months later; it may affect the next campaign, that's all!"

A million volunteers, Territorials and "Kitchener Army," in the first three months—that is not so bad for an

unmilitary nation of forty millions, after all. Indeed, considering this British imperturbability, this refusal to get excited over things, it becomes almost a miracle. Germany may point out that, even with her conscripts at the Front, she has as many volunteers from her exempt classes.

The cases are not parallel. In Germany the " religion of valour " was abroad ; the public, with its cast of opinion ordered from higher up, believed in war. The little children played war games on the streets. Just, kindly, the Englishman never believed in the sacredness of slaughter. And the boy who enters the ranks of the English army does a far, far better thing than recruit ever did before. He goes not for romance—there is no romance in the madness of Europe—nor yet for any religion of valour. He goes for that noblest motive in war—pure patriotism.

I used to watch the regiments trailing along the streets of London, just to see the squads of new recruits but lately impressed from the recruiting offices to fill out the companies. They marched with their heads thrown back ; for all

their English calm, there was a light of exaltation in their eyes. They looked like people going to take a sacrament. A far, far nobler thing than any conscript has ever done!

It is an axiom of this war, among the English, that a diagram of the recruiting would look like an hour-glass, widest at the top and bottom. The upper class and the lower classes have responded to the call rather than that set middle class, which, like the farmer class of the North, finds it hard to stir over any issue save a religious one.

I should venture to say that the proportion is immeasurably in favour of the upper class. I should even venture to add that, if we could get statistics, we should find this class recruited nearly up to conscript standards. They know, and they have known all the time, the peril of the Empire. Their old tradition of *noblesse oblige* makes lagging, in this crisis, shameful.

The officers of the British army come mainly from among these people. Every upper-class man who could possibly

make an officer is in training—or under a cloud. To an extent which statistics will never show us, the rest serve already in the ranks. I stood on a street corner of Paris once and heard a British Tommy in the transport service tell how " Private Pearson " had been shot by his side while they were escaping from the Germans. This Pearson, it came out, was Lord Cowdray's son. " Sirs " and " Honourables " occur in the lists of privates killed.

I visited Oxford in October, just when the colleges were opening. I found eight hundred students registered where there had been five thousand the year before! It looked like vacation in the quadrangles. The notices on the bulletin boards were mainly of a military character; and both town and college buildings were filled with wounded. Oxford, in short, seemed to me the only English town whose externals brought home the reality of war, like any place you may care to name in France. And Oxford, of course, is " upper class "—in our sense, if not quite in the English sense. Statistics showed in October that between thirty and forty per cent. of the

"Old Boys" from the English public schools were serving the army in some capacity.

Indeed, the naked eye of the casual observer could perceive this prevalence of the upper class in the ranks. The recruits, the "Kitchener Army," did not generally appear like the average, old-time English Tommy at all. You saw squads of privates who looked as though they should be officers; through every detachment ran that rangy, knife-built Norman type.

I have spoken of Manchester. There I saw a regiment, just recruited, march through, still in civilian clothes, with rain coats slung over their shoulders in place of blanket rolls. And they contrasted sharply with those idle factory operatives who watched them from the streets. In face and build they had the brand of the aristocracy or the upper middle class. Here, even here, where the industrial crisis should have given the lower class an impulse to enlist, the upper class had responded first to the call.

Certainly, the upper class has seen its

duty, has met the responsibility in its own spirit of *noblesse oblige*. England could ask no more of them than they have given. Yet, this class system of which they are the flower forms now a real perplexity of the Empire. The other classes have grown accustomed to leave in their hands all the responsibility for affairs. "Let George do it," might have been a motto of the shopman and the navvy. Now, in the crisis which none but the upper class fully expected, but which the upper class alone cannot meet, the others cling a little to their old attitude.

When the Manchester operative, the navvy, the shopman and the farmer realise their responsibility, develop their own spirit of *noblesse oblige* — then you may call England fully awake. And to waken these classes, the rulers of England are sounding all the gongs of the Press.

The English imperturbability—it has so many sides! I take it, from testimony on all hands, that as an individual your Englishman is the best fighting man out there on the line. The Belgians and French admit it openly, and the Germans

tacitly. He was made for this kind of warfare, wherein endurance of nerves under days and days of strain from noise and battering count more than dashing courage.

Of course, he is a professional or a volunteer, and therefore a natural fighter, while the others are conscripts, with the fighting men and the peace men all mixed up. But that doesn't wholly account for it. The answer is this quality of self-control, this ability to shut his imagination, this imperturbability. That is why he gets such comfort as he may out of life in the trenches, why he manages to maintain, in the midst of war, some of his fastidious personal habits, why, after a week under fire, he takes a sleep and a wash-up, and falls to playing football as though he were in camp at Aldershot.

Say what Kipling may of the flannelled fool or the muddied oaf, his lifelong training in sport, with the physique and discipline of the spirit which sport implies, serves him well on the line. The sports he has played have given him the quality of pluck for this greatest of all sports.

If he is, as the British think, the best bayonet man on the line, it is because bayonet work amounts to a straight contest between two athletes; the best-trained muscles, the best athletic spirit, wins. And he has that.

It grated upon us Americans, sometimes, to come from stricken Brussels or Paris and see so many things running at their usual pace in London; to find the cafés open, the inhabitants dressing for dinner, the theatres running. I heard a large concert-hall audience, on the night after Antwerp fell, laughing at jokes about the war; and, fresh from mourning Paris, I liked it but little.

It offended not only us neutral observers, but also certain serious spirits among the English, to see that neither Press nor pulpit could turn the British popular interest in football toward interest in the nobler task. I came to look upon all this, in time, as a mere defect of British qualities. Why, after all, should the Briton stop anything he wants to do, in order to mourn over the crisis of the Empire? What's the good in it? When

the time comes to fight, why, he'll fight. At present—there's a new play at the Savoy.

The finer spirits of the Empire do not take it in that spirit; but they are not airing their feelings publicly. An American editor who visited London to get manuscripts found that there were few to be had. The great, popular British authors simply were not writing; they couldn't. The day after Antwerp fell many city business men failed to show up at their offices; they were in no mood to face commonplaces. These, however, are "upper class" people, in our sense if not in the English sense, and the upper class is awake. It is the populace which gives the appearance, at least, of serenity.

All classes alike, they meet their personal crises in this war with that same imperturbable spirit. "Father," said a young city man at breakfast one morning, "I've gone into the London Scottish." "Bob," said his father, "it's time!" An elderly Englishman was concerning himself with a regiment of home guards. His chauffeur, a blank-faced, mechanical English servant,

drove him back from the grounds one day. "Sorry, sir, but I must leave to-morrow," said the chauffeur as they drew up at the door. "I'm going with the Lancers." That was his first hint, even to his fellow servants, of military intentions.

I had been talking over the business situation with a highly-intelligent, highly-likable young city man. At the end of our last session he told me that his secretary would give me any more facts I wanted; he was going out of town. It was his secretary who informed me that "out of town" meant the Front.

A reporter called on a British author, one of the Names. As they talked, the butler brought a telegram. The author read it; he handed it to the reporter. His nephew had been killed in action. The author passed his hand over his eyes.

"We're a military family," he said. "That's the second. You were asking—"

I have watched, here and there, the leave-takings. When a regiment goes to the Front there are no relatives to see them off; secrecy, dense and unfathomable, shrouds the whole military game as

played now in Great Britain; the leave-taking is done at home. But there are exceptions now and then. I sailed from Folkestone, *en route* to Brussels, in the early days of the war. I found aboard a Red Cross detachment, a group of British officers, and an army chaplain or so; their women, fine, tall Barbarians of charm and breeding, had managed by favour to go down to the boat with them. I should not describe the good-bye embraces of these women as cold, there was a suggestion of fire underneath; but at least they seemed casual. You knew that, once alone, they would cry their eyes out, but not there, where the situation called for a stiff upper lip. The officers, the Red Cross Corps and the chaplains waved at their women until we rounded the Folkestone pier head. Then, just for a second, one of the chaplains opened his mind to me.

"It's taking your life into your hands, isn't it?" he said. "And I suppose they know it!"

I sat in a café in Havre, when that city was an English base, beside an English

officer and his mother. I confess that I eavesdropped shamefully. She had some "pull," I suspect; someone, for sake of her mother heart, had rent the fog of war long enough to let her know that her boy would be a few days at Havre. They were to part there, at the café; he must go back at six o'clock to quarters, and in the morning to the Front. They chatted of the dog and the automobile and the neighbours; he got out a war map and tried to explain the situation. I doubt if she took in a word of that; her eyes were devouring his face as he looked down at the map. I was not shameless enough to watch them as they parted; but I heard him say, in almost his ordinary tone:

"Good-bye, Mumsey—it will soon be over!"

And she said:

"Be home for Christmas!" No more but that. They can do it, these English!

The very losses they take with that appearance of the casual spirit. I went down to Rouen with a young English scholar half-crippled by an old hunting accident which kept him out of the ranks.

He was going to see a wounded brother, and also to find if the army wouldn't have him as interpreter. Toward the end of a short but rather intimate acquaintance, I mentioned the losses. "Two in our family—dead," said he. The news about one, a brother, had come only two days before. And if I had not begun to understand the English, I should have called his tone cheerful.

I associated for two months, off and on, with a certain middle-aged Englishman, and never learned from him that he had lost two relatives in the early campaign. I knew it only from his mourning, and from his friends.

The French in their wonderful exaltation of heroism take pride in assuming this attitude; but they assume it with much struggle of the soul, I think. That control of the English, however, comes naturally. It is not lack of feeling; it is feeling so deep that it calls out the strongest thing in them—their self-control.

That imperturbability of the English, that failure to act as though they recognised the invidious and the dis-

agreeable—it is their weakness in Armageddon. It was unthinkable to them that Germany should ever go to war with them; it was unthinkable that any nation could make headway against England while the navy held the coast.

By vice of their imperturbability they entered the war of the nations unprepared; by vice of it they muddled their early preparations; by vice of it, they failed to prepare the national mind for a supreme struggle; by vice of it, recruiting has gone all too slowly. If they lose, if their Empire fall, it will be by vice of this quality.

Yet it is this imperturbability which prevents them, now, from anything like panic over the danger; which has enabled them to work system and efficiency out of a muddled beginning; which makes even their raw troops behave like veterans on that nerve-racking line; which turns every threat of Germany into a prop for the national backbone; which, should invasion come, will keep them fighting when any other people would have resigned themselves. If they win, if their Empire survive, it will be by virtue of this quality.

VI

THE SPLENDID STORY OF YPRES

February, 1915

In a parliamentary debate held during February the Opposition expressed a strong hope that members of the Press might have access to the British lines, in order that the public might know about the "Battle of Ypres" and the glorious feats of British arms thereat performed. To many, to most, of the English this was the first news that any part of the great, continuous battle along the French border had been divided by anyone into battles or minor engagements. They knew, this British public, that there had been great feats of arms in and about the old capital of French Flanders; they knew that Britain had become dark with mourning for the men lost in those trying days; they knew that somehow since November

Germany was a nation besieged by land and water, a nation fighting a defensive battle; they did not know the cause. The immensity of this war; the veil drawn by military censorship; the very novelty of military science brought about by new servants of death, such as the aeroplane, have so confused the situation, so muddled the public mind, that even the military experts at home have only begun to realise that a great, decisive action, separate from the rest of the war in its character and consequences, occurred on the line between La Bassée and the sea in October and November of 1914.

A decisive action—perhaps the really decisive action of the war. Indeed, when history runs a thread through the confusions and obscurities of Armageddon, historians may call it the most vital battle in the annals of the island people. Not Crécy nor Blenheim nor Waterloo seems now more important. For it closed the last gap in the combined defensive-offensive operations of the Western Allies. It made impossible—short of an utter collapse of the Allied Armies—any further German

move on Paris or any move to take the French in the rear. Most importantly to England, it sealed the road to Calais, that vital, critical port within eyesight of the English coast. Further, more English troops were engaged here than in any previous battle of the Empire, more Germans than in the whole Franco-Prussian War—a hundred and twenty thousand English against six hundred thousand Germans. Yet one thinks of the English force, and rightly, as a "little" army in this war of unprecedented numbers; it seems, in its relation to the whole picture, like one of those brigades which won immortal glory in old wars by holding a crucial point on the battle-line.

Up to that brief breathing-spell when the British army shifted from its position on the Aisne to its new fighting-ground on the Western front, it had been engaged every day for seven weeks. There had been the attack at Mons, when its force, equivalent in numbers to two army corps, found themselves attacked by four German corps and outflanked on the left by another. There followed four days of a backward

fight which every surviving Tommy of the British Expeditionary Force remembers only as a confused kind of hell. By night they dropped on their faces to wake to the sound of guns, to the bursting of shells, to more marching, more action. By day the massed German lines poured in on them four deep. Rank after rank the British mowed them down until the riflemen and machine-gun men retreated from very weariness of arm and horror of more killing.

There came after four days a little respite, during which the British, for strategic reasons, continued their retreat, fighting only rearguard actions. There came, too, a change in the spirit of Tommy Atkins. This was a professional army and a veteran army—the only one on the line, else the history of September, 1914, might have to be written in other terms. Though splendidly equipped, trained to the minute, educated to the last frill in military science, the others—except for a few divisions of the French—knew only the theoretical warfare of blank cartridges. The greater part of the British had faced

ball cartridges in India or South Africa.

They had the spirit of veterans. And like veterans they resented a runaway fight. They began to murmur—not over the dead left for the Germans to bury nor the wounded which choked the hospitals of Paris, nor their own prospect of annihilation, but against this kind of warfare which never let them stand and fight. Here it was that Field-Marshal Sir John French went among his troops, refusing to let them rise and salute; as they rested by the roadside he sat down with them, told them that if they would keep it up just a little longer he would promise them a fight. The muttering died down, the Army went on—backward. Again the Germans pressed them; again there was the ruthless, mechanical slaughter of charging, tight-locked lines, the ghastly mowing of machine-guns, the tragedies of bursting shells.

It was the night of September 6 now; the British army in its southward retreat had passed inside of Paris; it halted to the south-east of the French capital and

made another stand. The blackness of despair lay that night over the leaders of the British Army. Some of the Staff officers have admitted since that they saw no way out; they hoped only to find a good position for a last stand, and to make the massacre cost the Germans as dearly as possible.

Sir John French and his corps commanders, clean fagged out, turned in for a little sleep. At midnight a courier from the line wakened them. He was pale and shaken. The German force to the north had got in touch with a new German force which had appeared from the east. They were cut off from the French Army; the jig was up. Sir John French and his two corps commanders in summary attire, just as they were roused from their beds, held a council by the light of a smoking country lamp. French invented a way to meet the new movement, ordered dispositions accordingly, and went back to bed. That council of war on the eve of September 7, 1914, one of the great days in the history of the world, will furnish no theme for the battle painter of the

future who loves to trick out his historic figures in gilt and gold lace!

And in the morning French, who, it is said, has an uncanny sense for the mind of his enemy, felt a slackening of the attack on his front. Before the sun was high his aeroplanes had reported that Von Kluck, at his front, had faced east and was moving away from Paris. French struck with all his force. The French Army of Paris made their famous taxicab movement and struck also. By night the German movement was not a shift but a full retreat.

We know now the German plan of campaign and have a better understanding of this whole action at the Marne. That great Western Army of Von Kluck which had swept through Belgium, broken across the unfortified French frontier, and thrust forward its cavalry outposts until the Parisian fire department buried Uhlans within the city limits—it was never intended that this army should take Paris. That honour was for the Crown Prince, who was coming through Rheims from the north-east. Von Kluck was to dispose

thoroughly of the French and British at his front, to shift to the left and join the Prince's army at a point between Rheims and Paris. Then, down the excellent Rheims-Paris roads, they would march together to the investment of the French capital.

But somewhere along the line Von Kluck made his mistake — he underrated the enemy. In the original French plan of concentration, the extreme left under General Manoury was to mobilise at Amiens, up toward the Belgian border. That mobilisation was never completed— the Germans came on too fast. Manoury's army fell back to the South and West, where quietly, and utterly unknown to the Germans, it completed its mobilisation. When the time came to execute the great general plan, Manoury struck first, on Von Kluck's right flank. He turned, he started prematurely eastward, presenting his flank in turn to the British and the army of Paris.

Sir John French struck ; the Army of Paris struck ; more importantly, the whole French line from Switzerland to Paris pivoted on the Vosges, moved up its

reserve line and initiated a general attack. The new attack took the Crown Prince on his front and his left flank. Von Kluck fell back faster and faster; it was all but annihilation for him. The Crown Prince and his supporting armies to right and left fell back. The withdrawal became a retreat.

That was the great day for France—that September 7. England's greatest day was yet to come; the British after all, were only two corps out of thirty. That day, from the Vosges to Paris, Northern France was a heaven of glory and a hell of slaughter. That day regiments and battalions did the heroically impossible in such numbers that no special mentions, no war reports, no decorations, can ever recognise or name them. That day a whole population of France's fairest provinces cowered and ran or stood and died. That day the transports of wounded choked every back trail, the dead sprinkled every forest, in northern France. No one will ever tell the full story. It would be like trying to write the history of a nation by telling the full life-story of every individual in the nation. But this war, whatever

account it holds against the future, can never know another day so significant to France. Its infinite agonies were the birthpains of a new France. From it emerged the transformed French warrior; not emotional but stolid, not mercurial but determined; above all, a warrior recovered from his old back-thought, his old, hidden fear of the Prussian superman.

This, however, is the story of the British Army; it must ignore that series of actions from the Vosges to Soissons wherein the French locked the line for four hundred miles against the German counter-attacks and fenced the enemy off from the fortress of Verdun—"ten Waterloos a week" someone has called it. After two days of uninterrupted rearguard fighting the Germans made their stand at the Aisne. A series of actions more or less severe proved that neither the British nor the French to right and left could make present headway against the strong German entrenchments. From the Vosges to Lille the line locked tight; it was no longer open warfare: it was a siege. As Sir John French's despatches show, the British felt the German resistance settling

down to defensive tactics. The part of the line running to right and left of Soissons became no longer important.

But there was fighting of sorts to do far to the left, and early in October the whole British Army yielded its trenches to the French reserves and moved over toward Calais. It was their first relief from continuous battle. The Army, I believe, has discovered a genius in Major-General Robertson, who had charge of transportation and commissary. So expeditiously did he work, and yet so quietly, that the first German officers whom the British took prisoners expressed surprise not so much at their capture as to the identity of their captors. "We thought we were fighting the French Territorials," they said.

To understand why the subsequent operations became so vital to the whole campaign, you must understand the situation on October 11, when the British re-established touch with the enemy; it is a matter of recapitulating old history in a new light. The Allied line reached to Lille, fifty miles from the sea, and near the Belgian border. On this end of the

line, Allies and Germans alike, first one and then the other, had been outflanking —ringing each other with artillery and earthworks like one of those representations of the mountain chains which we used to draw in our school maps. That line was lengthening northward and westward day by day. But the fifty miles from Lille to the sea lay open. This gap commanded the routes to Dunkirk, to Calais, to Boulogne—to all the important French Channel ports. It commanded also an easy and most accommodating route to Paris. If the Germans left open that gap, it was because the fortress of Antwerp still menaced their western line of communications. But on October 8 Antwerp fell —fell so suddenly that a division of British troops under General Rawlinson, sent to assist the Belgians in holding the outer defences, did not arrive until the Germans had gained ground to emplace their 42-centimetre siege howitzers and had made further defence of the fortress a mere technicality. Rawlinson's division advanced, joined what remained of the Belgian Army, and retreated with them down the coast past Zeebrugge, past Ostend. The Belgians

took up a final position at the river Yser, where they stood to defend the last sliver of their territory. Rawlinson, roughly joining forces with them on their right, extended his lines towards Ypres.

At about this period the French *communiqué* lifted for a moment the veil over these serious operations, so vital to the whole war; and the glimpse sent a chill through Paris. "Dense masses of cavalry," it reported, "have appeared on the Tourcoing-Armentières road, screening an important new force of the enemy." This was the immediate bid of Germany to pour through that gap. The French, outflanked, retired the left of their line from before Lille to the town of La Bassée. The Germans took La Bassée; on the heights before that hamlet, grown suddenly important in history, the French made a stand and dug in.

The gap between La Bassée and the sea remained, to all military intents and purposes, open and dangerous. The Allies plugged it by various devices, as an engineer builds a dam of earth before he prepares his steel locks. They overstretched the line of the Belgians. They

threw in the French Territorials—men in their forties, and therefore by mental and physical condition inferior as soldiers to the young, perfectly trained first-line troops. The heavier masses of the German advance were not yet upon the Allied line; so it did not break, but it bulged terribly; the campaign at this point became a backward fight. The long battle on the western front was now like a rubber bladder with a weak spot. Blow it up and the bladder bulges at that spot. Blow it a little further and the bladder breaks at that spot.

The breaking-point was near when, on October 11, the first of the main British force detrained at St. Omer. Not only the German outposts but even strong forces of the main body had reached in some places as far south as a line drawn from Calais parallel with the Great Line. The Belgians and the French Territorials resisted with what force they had; but their resistance grew irregular. "It's guerilla warfare, that's what it is," reported a "sniping" Canadian correspondent who, in early October, got out to the lines and miraculously returned to Calais unarrested.

The English Army found its task cut out for it. They must drive the advanced German forces back to a line already established in the minds of their strategists —to complete that all-important operation of closing the siege of Germany. They must keep in touch with the French at La Bassée; they must establish touch with the Belgians and Rawlinson's division on the west. General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien's Second Corps, detraining at St. Omer on the 11th, went immediately into action at the toughest point in the whole campaign—La Bassée. That village held out against every attack—it is holding still. It became, as the campaign went on, only a pivot from which the English forces turned the Germans back from France and Flanders. For a week the successive British detachments were detraining and going forward at once to fight and to die. By the 19th the whole Army was fighting a scattering, confused-looking battle whose focus was Ypres, the beautiful old capital of French Flanders. By that time, also, the Belgian Army, which had been given a brief breathing-

spell by the Germans, was desperately engaged in holding the Yser at the point of the line nearest the sea. The bridge-head of the Yser, the critical point for them, had been lost and won again; falling back on the immemorial defensive measure of the Flemish, the Belgians had flooded the country; the extreme left of the line was secure.

Rawlinson, stretching his lines beyond all security, was fighting a desperate battle to hold Ypres and to maintain touch with the Belgians and their French reinforcements to his left. By the 20th that line had grown perilously thin; by the 20th, too, the German masses were coming on faster and faster; and they were beginning to strike at his weakest spot—his touch with the French and Belgians to his left.

Meantime, Sir John French, even before the whole Army was detrained, had swung his main forces through a series of manœuvres which the soldier of the future may study for their brilliance and for their defiance of military tradition. Visitors returning to London in October described General Headquarters and the town which

surrounded it as "the quietest spot in Europe." Though the guns sounded everywhere in the distance, peasants were ploughing, boys going fishing, housewives scrubbing the doorsteps just as usual. Heart of the town and hope of the Empire was that house where this small, compact, blue-eyed man with his mixture of French and Irish blood which means genius, his overlay of English blood which means stability, this old *beau sabreur* transformed by the change of warfare to a thinking machine, was solving a situation which was like twenty chess problems at once. Of mornings he worked at his desk; of afternoons he held council or visited the lines; at luncheon, at tea, at dinner, he thrashed it out with his officers. "He violated," says a friendly critic, "every rule of warfare—and succeeded." They were judicious violations. This is a new warfare; some of the old rules do not hold. He was making the traditions of a new warfare.

So complex is this new warfare that a layman cannot follow the separate actions which made the great result. Indeed,

French's own despatches, written at a time when he must conceal much from the enemy, fail to describe these actions in any detail. Every day he let loose a separate hell against the increasing German hordes at his front. French was bending all these complex things to one end—to make untenable any German position below the line drawn across Flanders and northern France by the strategists of the Allies. In all this torn, bleeding province of fire and death the action rose to separate battles which would have been famous in old wars. The soixante-quinze guns of the French artillery support, the rifles and bayonets of the British Third Corps, took the hill of Mont des Cats; did it, too, against odds. That same Third Corps—always the attacking force, and almost always against odds—went forward in a week to Armentières, a gain of twenty miles or more. The Second Corps, fighting on the right of the Third, made a narrower turn. It pivoted on La Bassée; its left went forward ten miles to a point where it was in touch with the Third.

So as the critical 20th approached the main force under Sir John French extended for some twenty-five miles from before La Bassée to a point beyond Ypres; and now the German resistance stiffened and held. Neither the English nor the French could drive much farther. But the line was established. And it was a straight line. Half-formed, insecure, it still reached out and touched that Franco-Belgian defence which ran from the Forest of Houthulst to the sea.

That extreme left of the British line—the point where it joined the line of its Allies—was held by Rawlinson's harassed, overstretched division. What that immortal Seventh Division endured then and thereafter is a separate story. And just then more Germans and still more Germans were rushed down the Belgian railroads. "They seemed to rain on us everywhere," a spectator has said; but most of all they rained on that weak point to the left.

Now French, "violating every rule of war," had not only drawn the lines of his important Second and Third Corps very thin but he had shot his last bolt of reserves.

All the reinforcements available from England had been used up in filling out units —this purely intellectual summary has taken no account of the heavy cost in life and limb of these British attacks. The Indian troops, hurried up from Marseilles, had been rushed to the Front. The day when they arrived the British forces were hanging on by their eyelids. Someone, I am told, looked back from a trench and saw a solitary outpost, a turbaned, cloaked figure of the desert, very startling in the green, peaceful French landscape, riding over a hill. Behind him nodded the turbans of Sikh Cavalry; and the English in the trenches, who seemed past emotion, waved their rifle barrels and cheered. But neither Indians, nor French Territorials, nor French Cavalry, nor French Artillery seemed sufficient.

Only the First Corps remained out of action. An army does not move in a day; while the Second Corps and the Third had been battering their way through a twenty-five mile advance, the First, under General Sir Douglas Haig, was still coming over from its old position before Soissons.

By the 20th they were detrained and ready for the line.

There came that night a special moment of decision for Sir John French; and on his decision perhaps rested the fate of the campaign. He himself has stated it undramatically in his despatches. Should he use the First to reinforce the Second and Third, thereby securing the ground already won on the right? They were drawn thin, the Second and Third—thin. One day, it is said, French, visiting the lines, talked to a colonel who was hard pressed. "We can't hold out much longer, sir," said the colonel. "It is impossible!" "I want only men who can do the impossible," said French. "Hold!"

The Second and Third were doing the impossible. If any military force since wars began ever needed reinforcements it was this one. But there was the threat beyond Ypres at the point between the English left and the Franco-Belgian right—a place where the weak spot in the bladder might bulge and, bulging too much, break. Sir John French, "with the air," someone has said, "of a business man closing a

deal," made his decision and turned in for a little sleep. He chose to let the Second Corps and the Third continue with the impossible. He sent the First Corps to the line about the city which has given name to this whole series of actions—Ypres. Almost from the day when they reached the line they became the Iron Corps of the British; and their Commander, General Sir Douglas Haig, stands second only to French in the credit due for winning the Battle of Ypres. They incorporated what was left of Rawlinson's harassed, weary, battered Seventh Division; they prepared to dig in and to hold.

Ten days followed in which nothing decisive happened and everything happened. The Germans rocked their attack from side to side, searching for the weak spot. They gained here; they lost there; but the line remained as it had been when Haig moved up his First Corps. The British held on, and continued to dig in.

Then came the 31st—the crucial day for England. The attacks had been

growing stronger; across the lines the British heard the Germans singing as though working themselves up, German fashion, to a Berserk courage; captured orders showed that the Kaiser had commanded a great assault which should clear the way to Calais and to Paris.

Before the sun was high on that morning of the 31st a British aviator vol-planed down to his own line with a wing damaged by shrapnel. He dropped from his seat pale and shaken. "A close shave?" they asked. "It isn't that!" he said, "it's what I've seen—three corps, I tell you—against our First!" So he jerked out his story. He had seen the roads and ridges like ant-hills and ant-runs with men; he had seen new batteries going into position; he had seen, far away, the crawling grey serpents which were still more German regiments going to their slaughter. "And we're so thin from up there," he said, "and they're so many!" Hard on this came hurried news to headquarters from the front. The German artillery and a massed attack of German infantry had broken the First Division

of the First Corps near Ypres; the Division was going back; the French support was going back. "We must have reinforcements," said the message. "I can give you my two sentries and my Headquarters Staff," replied French. Disaster after disaster followed. The Royal Scots Fusiliers, remaining too long in a hot place, were for their very valour cut off. The Germans had found new artillery positions, had shelled General Douglas Haig's headquarters. A shell had burst in the house. Haig was outside at the time; but nearly every staff officer of the First Corps was killed or wounded. The army up there was almost headless —was fighting as individuals on primitive fighting instinct.

A day's march away from Ypres is the ford where 2,000 years ago Cæsar had his close call from the Nervii. That was the battle where Cæsar, snatching a shield from a soldier, himself plunged into the thick of things and, acting as line-officer and general all at once, rallied the Roman army. Warfare has changed, but manhood and leadership remain the

same. French jumped into his motor-car and rushed to the line of the First Division. He had not so far to go as he thought. The line had retired four miles. Through his glasses he could see the close-locked quadruple ranks of German infantrymen attacking everywhere. And everywhere the English were fighting valiantly, but without method. They were in it to the last man—even the regimental cooks. The officers of infantry and cavalry were firing with the privates, their servants loading spare rifles behind them.

French, assisted by the able Haig, became a Headquarters Staff himself. They say that he risked his life twenty times that afternoon, as his motor-car took him from focus of trouble to focus of more trouble. He gave an order here; he encouraged an officer there. In the thickest of that day's fighting he left his motor-car and ran to a wood where a brigade was giving ground. As he rushed in, a wounded private staggered back into his arms. French laid him gently down and went on talking to his men, encouraging them, rallying them, until they held. He

gathered up a part of the broken First Division and threw it at the flank of a German attack which was proceeding on the reckless theory that the English were totally beaten. The Germans broke; the British re-took Gheluvelt on the original line. With this start, and partly by move after move of the closest and yet most daring strategy, but partly by the spirit of an army which begins to see victory, French snatched back the positions lost on that four-mile retirement and rested on the original line.

The British had merely held—technically—really, they had won the climacteric action in that long battle which must determine the future course of this war. The cost of it was no less than the cost of other famous victories. One Division landed on the Belgian coast at full strength of 19,000. It had only 3,500 effectives when this campaign was done. One regiment went into that campaign 1,100 strong. It came out but 73. And most of the lost thousand went down that day before Ypres. Another regiment took 1,350 men to the western front. It had fewer than

300 after the battle of Ypres. Most of them, too, fell in this action of the 31st of October. A famous cavalry brigade went into action 4,500 strong. It came out decimated; for it had been holding off, alone, a whole army corps of 41,000!

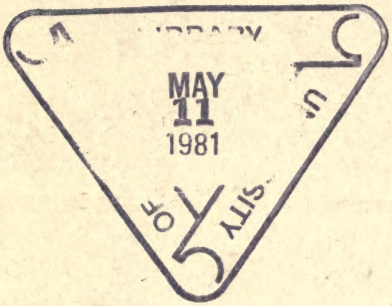
In old wars a battle lasted a day or two; victory came in an hour, and it was all over but the pursuit; the courier went forward to the capital; there was illumination and bell-ringing. In this new war no one, not even the commander, may know the decisive moment; the day of real victory blends into days where the fight still goes on; to none of these modern battles is there as yet an end. The 31st of October was the decisive point of the action before Ypres, but no one knew it then. The attacks and counter-attacks, the digging in, went on. French troops began arriving in force to strengthen and make sure the line.

Nevertheless, the Germans had one more great assault on their programme. Ypres is the old historic capital of French Flanders; and the British observers noted a curious fact about the operations against Ypres.

However heavy the German bombardment, the famous old Cloth Hall, the most beautiful building of its kind in Flanders, went unscathed by shells. It was saved, we know now, for a particular purpose. Kaiser Wilhelm himself was moving forward with a special force to a special assault which should finally and definitely break the Allied line at Ypres. To do this was to clear Flanders of the Allies; and then, as by custom he might, he intended to annex Belgium in the Cloth Hall of Ypres. He came with his own Prussian Guard; it was that Guard which, on the 15th, led another terrible massed attack. It was no less vigorous than the attack of the 31st; but the British, reinforced now by the French, met it better. Again the dense masses poured in; again the very officers fired until their rifles grew too hot to hold. When, that night, the strength of the German attack was spent, the better part of the Prussian Guard lay dead in a wood—lay, at some places, in ranks eight deep. The second and lesser climax was past. A fortnight more, and the line from La Bassée to the

sea had been locked as thoroughly as the line from Switzerland to La Bassée. It had cost England 50,000 men out of 120,000 engaged—a proportion of loss greater than any previous war ever knew. It had cost the French and Belgians 70,000. It probably cost the Germans 375,000. That is a half-million in all. The American Civil War has been called the most terrible in modern history. In this one long battle Europe lost as many men as the North lost in the whole Civil War.

It happened so close to the capital of Great Britain that officers in a hurry are now making the trip from London to Headquarters in four hours. It happened in an age when intelligence travels by lightning. It happened in a day of that age when every mind of the Western world was awaiting hungrily for news. Yet the real news—the news that the battle of Ypres was decisive, on the western front, that it may rank with Waterloo and Blenheim for glory and for effect—that news is coming out only now, months after the event. In such strange times do we live!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